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ABSTRACT

This conference proceedings compiles papers presented at the Institute of Early Childhood in July 2000, the fifth in a series examining the challenges which the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy present the early childhood profession in Australia. The conference focused on time and play in preschool education. Paper topics related to the history of early childhood education, contemporary early childhood education, and children's and adult's different conceptualizations of time. Following a summary of presentations and introductory remarks, the academic papers are: (1) "Play's the Thing: A Discursive Tour of Early Childhood Education in Four Acts" (Jan Jipson and Chelsea Bailey); (2) "Trapped in Time: Power, Time and Teaching" (Janet Robertson); (3) "Reconceptualising Time" (Kerrie Trebilcock); and (4) "Passing the Time: Book Ends for the Fifth Conference" (Alma Fleet). Each paper contains references. (KB)

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UNPACKING TIME: MINUTES FROM REGGIO EMILIA, AUSTRALIA AND AMERICA

Conference Proceedings: 8th-9th July, 2000
IEC, Macquarie University
Sydney, Australia

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Unpacking Time: Minutes from Reggio Emilia, Australia and America

Conference Proceedings

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Editors' Note

Alma Fleet and Janet Robertson

Conferences which challenge our thinking and stretch our comfort zone are a useful contribution to the early childhood professional landscape.

The Institute of Early Childhood continually offers itself as a site for such opportunities. The papers in these proceedings provide the flavour of the fifth of a series of conferences which strive to unpack the provocations emerging from Reggio Emilia, Italy, as they evolve in the Australian context.

Jan Jipson and Chelsea Bailey offer a piece which was presented as a dramatic scenario to confront our images of play and to encapsulate some current arguments on the early childhood field. It was too confronting for some and very stimulating for others. I feel that we were honoured to have such a unique and valuable contribution to our discussion in this particular time and place. (The editing is 'loose' to reflect the fluidity of the original.)

After the historical deconstruction, Janet Robertson gives us children's voices to help flag the journey and Kerrie Trebilcock moves through her landscape with poetry and children's investigations.

In addition to the papers included here, the following were also contributors to this conference:

Chelsea Bailey, Sandra Cheesman, Jan Glazier, Sue Hull, Jan Jipson, Ursula Kolbe, George Lewis, Ric McConaghy, Catherine Patterson, Jenny Rule, Lesley Studans, Kerrie Trebilcock, and Truida Trevere.

We thank them for their contribution. We also thank the documentors who contributed their work to the dialogue.

We trust that those of you who were part of the event will value the chance to revisit the ideas and experience, while those of you who are meeting these papers for the first time will not only enjoy them, but will also seek opportunities to engage in the ongoing journey.

Summary of Presentations
(not all included a paper in these proceedings)

"There are times all the time": ***Kerrie Trebilcock.*** This presentation explored pre-school children's understanding of time through extended investigations.

Patterns in time, rhythms in space: Aspects of children's play with materials. ***Ursula Kolbe***. Focused on what appears to be a sense of time in the 'making' processes of even very young children. "Sculpting in time" can be an apt description for what children often do and make.

Children's right to the past, present and future: ***Janet Robertson.*** This presentation looked at how children, if given time, can grasp hold of their own time. Situated as they are within the past and the future how can we assist them to live in their present?

Time and the early years of school: ***Alma Fleet, Jenny Rule & Truida Trevere***
This presentation considered the challenges in the early years of school.

Time in space: ***Ric McConaghy*** This presentation discussed the notion that outdoor spaces, in both design and practice, illustrate how children can create their own time.

Making time: ***Jan Glazier & Lesley Studans*** This presentation explored the possibilities for 'making time' on behalf of children and teachers in the early years of school.

Children with a special right to time: ***George Lewis*** This presentation considered, and questioned, the impact developmental theory has on children with special needs.

Rhythms rather than routines - to dance with infants: ***Sandra Cheeseman & Sue Hull*** This presentation examined the strong, yet subtle, rhythms of young infants and what is really important to them in a day.

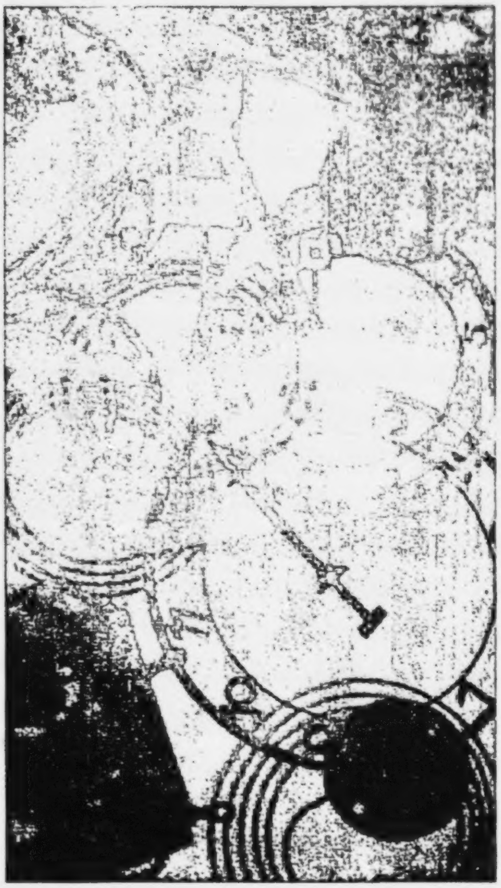
A question of good time: Tertiary teaching and learning: ***Catherine Patterson***.
This session explored time in teacher education settings.

The politics of children's play: ***Jan Jipson***. Jan explored the politics of play.

The politics of children's time: ***Chelsea Bailey***. Chelsea discussed the issues surrounding time and children.

Passing the time. Book ends for the fifth conference

Alma Fleet



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Passing the time
Book ends for the fifth conference

Alma Fleet

In this journey, I believe we can be enriched by consulting a traveller whom some of you may have met– Saint-Exupery's *Little Prince* (c1943). He was on a journey from a very small and very far away planet to find a solution to a problem he had involving the care of a very vulnerable and beautiful small rose. The problem is too complex and delicate to explain here, but one of the experiences along his journey is particularly relevant. He had been stopping at other small planets to seek advice from others who might be knowledgeable.

At one place, he met a merchant:

This was a merchant who sold pills that had been invented to quench thirst. You need only swallow one pill a week, and you would feel no need of anything to drink.

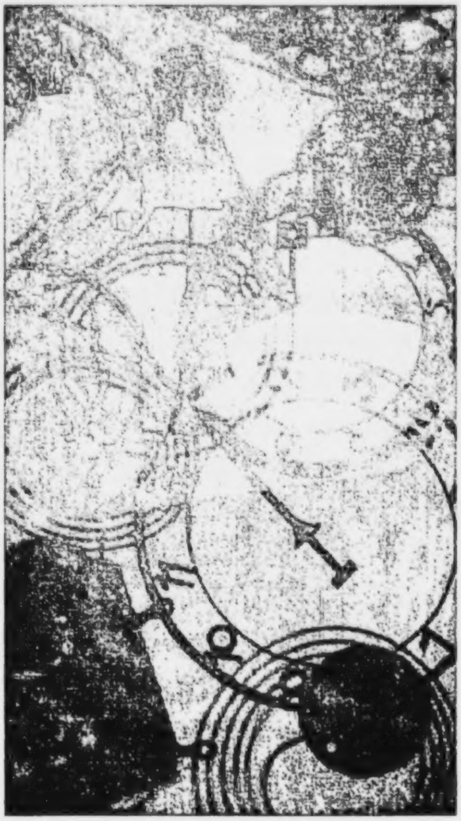
"Why are you selling those?" asked the little prince.
"Because they save a tremendous amount of time," said the merchant. "Computations have been made by experts. With these pills, you save fifty-three minutes in every week."
"And what do you do with those fifty-three minutes?"
"Anything you like..."
"As for me," said the little prince to himself, "if I had fifty-three minutes to spend as I liked, I should walk at my leisure toward a spring of fresh water." (pp73-74)

With this orientation to different valuing of time, may we begin.

Play's the Thing:

A Discursive Tour of Early Childhood Education in Four Acts

Janice A. Jipson
&
Chelsea Bailey



Act I: Northern Light: The Transcendence of Early Childhood
Act II: The Imperial Empiricist and Super Hero Play
Act III: Passion Play: The Embodiment of Early Childhood
Act IV: On Changing Direction and Taking the Time to Play

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Preface

We would like to both welcome you and thank you for including us in the conversations this afternoon. It is exciting to share across hemispheres and we look forward to the opportunities to discuss what we present for you today and tomorrow. This afternoon's keynote address is the first of a two-session presentation that will continue tomorrow morning. We hope you can join us for both. If you are not able, however, we hope the rich and playful text we have constructed for you today will inspire continued conversation.

As this conference is concerned with time and play, we have chosen to approach this keynote address somewhat differently. We, ourselves, have chosen to play with the idea of 'keynote address.' Because words are the medium of adults in general, and of conferences specifically, we are going to play with words. We will be playful with the languages of early childhood, past and present, traditional and progressive, professional and personal, in order to expose and "trouble" these languages which we, as early childhood educators, often take too seriously. Because we will be taking you "off-road" in our travels and the terrain will sometimes be unfamiliar, we want to provide you with a brief road map.

Our two-part keynote address will travel through four distinct terrains. These terrains present four perspectives through which we will talk and think through early childhood education. The first is a historical perspective originating in the mid to late 1900's in Europe and the United States which provided the base for much of early childhood education today. The second is a more contemporary rationalist-empirical perspective embodied in developmentally appropriate practices and its critiques, including the reconceptualist movement of which we are a part. Tomorrow, we will engage a sentimental/sensual perspective embodied foremost in romantic images of women and children and, finally, we will reconsider all of these perspectives through a post-modern deconstructive lens.

We were advised that Australians are leery of Americans who present themselves as having all the answers. We are, too. Therefore, you will not get answers from us. On the contrary, it is our intention to play with early childhood and its powerful discourses and to also play with you as we explore, and question the notions of work, play, and time in early childhood education. In this sense, we hope to imagine our time here with you a little differently.

Introduction

I'd like to begin by sharing with you a quotation from Hanna Rachel Bell 1998) who writes of the Aboriginal culture in her book, Men's Business, Women's Business:

> *The Aboriginal method of education is to simply tell a story and let its imagery, atmosphere, texture, and meaning work themselves out in the subconcious part of the mind. By contrast, the Western method is to take a story and intellectualize it, to analyze it for meaning and significance, to spell out all its nuances and subtlety, to summarize it in "how to steps," then to write about it or put a formulated strategy into practice.... The power of allegory [does] an infinitely better job of indentifying the relevance of stories than we could.*

Bell continues by advocating for the story-telling method of the indigenous people rather than the Western method of academic discourse. Chelsea and I share her position. Much of our independent earlier work has explored the use of narrative and performance to create a base from which our colleagues can construct their own understandings and interpretations of our work.

Keeping Bell's call for story in mind, we have created a readers' theater performance for the conference. The script is based on our own research and writing, as well as that of our colleagues in early childhood education. So, here is "Play's the Thing: A Discursive Tour of Early Childhood Education (in Four Acts)".

We'd like to do our play for you, play with you if you please, around what we see as some major conceptions and influences on early chldhood education. We'd like to 'take the time' to reconceptualize early childhood education with you and consider our assumptions about children's activities, about the use of time, and about 'official' standards and practices. Each of the four 'acts' of our play will speak to you from a different direction or position, employing both 'academic' discourse and the not-so-academic language that sometimes better reflects the essence of early childhood.

The first act, *Northern Lights: The Transcendance of Early Childhood*, is an historical discourse and, as such, is foundational, rooted in European Enlightenment and exhalting such authoratative beliefs as: Truth is self evident (United States Declaration of Independence); The way, the truth, and the light (the Bible); and the truth (or at least the answer) is out there (X Files and The Matrix). This predominantly eighteenth and nineteenth century discourse proclaims its own truths abut early childhood education. We present it as a series of monologues, orations, or sermons, in the original language of its spokespersons: Friedrich Froebel, founder of the German kindergarten; Ellen Key, a feminist educator; and Elizabeth Peabody, an activist educator who founded the first English speaking kindergarten in the United States. Each of these philosopher-educators comments on the beliefs upon which early childhood education was based.

Note that many perspectives introduced here - the sentimental, the embodied, the reformist, the utilatarian, the standards driven - will re-emerge in later acts. So please, take a moment to listen to their voices.

Act I

Northern Light: The Transcendence of Early Childhood

Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852): "In a healthily constituted family it is the mother who first cares for, watches over, and envelopes the child. All-embracing mother love seeks to awaken and to interpret the feeling of community between the child and the father, brother, and sister. As regards the growth and development of man I only desire to take the place of the silently working, tenderly cherishing mother. The natural mother does all this instinctively, without instruction and direction; but this is not enough; it is needful that she should do it consciously in a certain inner living connection.

Society has separated the roles of mother and woman previously bonded in primordial union. The unfortunate division of roles affects both the poor and the rich, both women of leisure and working women. Upper-class German women have almost entirely abandoned their role as mothers, preferring to delegate responsibilities to wet nurses, governesses, and teachers. For the working woman, on the other hand, the struggle for existence separates her from the daily tasks of motherhood, for she is forced to place her children in care. Once lost, childrearing skills are difficult to regain. The two classes are related through a highly developed economy of domestic services. For rich or poor, high or low, cultured or unlettered, the imperfect attainment of ends by the one class brings about disadvantage to the other. Ironically, women from diverse social backgrounds come to share the same misfortune: poor child management. I deplore the shameful ill-management of children which I attribute to ignorance, perversity, distortion, and even the absence of womanly, child-loving sensibility.

Now all our thoughts and efforts should be directed to educating and training mothers and nurses for such fostering of childhood and humanity. However, concerning educational institutions for children's maids, there are obstacles offered by society in general, the greatest of which is the low esteem in which maids are held. Even after having graduated from the training institution, a girl will prefer a situation as cook or house-maid to that of nursery maid, because the former are esteemed so much higher and paid so much better, that accepting a place with children would be considered a drop in position.

Furthermore, mothers also treat the children's maids with disrespect. There is little hope for improvement until the mothers will begin to educate their own selves. So, let them attend Kindergarten and study the system themselves. Then they will grow able to know what to expect of their maids and how to judge of their capacities. Such attendance and study ought also to be enjoined upon young ladies of every rank of society, who ought to thoroughly educate themselves in order to be equipped for their future task of educating their children. No education can get along without the active co-operation of mothers who ought to have a full comprehension of their true natural calling, the care of childhood.

To make my educational system truly and thoroughly effective, it is necessary that the family, more prominently parents and relatives, should join the teacher, and that, above all, mother, and women in general, should contribute their experience and help by careful supervision and quickening guidance at home and within the family.

I have trained young women, ages 15 to 20, for nursery maids or child educators. In my view, the training of nursery maids and nurses (or rather, as they should be called, child fosterers and educational helpers) differs from that of the child directors and child educators; the training of the first aims more at mere practice and knowledge of the particulars and their true application, while the training of the second has in view more the insight into and the survey over the whole, and not only the freer appropriation resulting from these, but also the later fulfillment of the vocation, more full of life, and more freely active.

Education in instruction and training, originally and in its first principles, should necessarily be passive, following (only guarding and protecting), not prescriptive, categorical, and interfering. Therefore, do not tell the child in words much more than he could find himself without your words. To have found one fourth of the answer by his own effort is of more value and importance to the child than it is to half hear and half understand it in the words of another; because this causes mental indolence.

The early introduction of the child into the perception of form, size, and number lies in the nature of the child; not in the abstract, bodiless, and objectless, but connected with bodies and objects. The child is much injured and weakened by having placed before himself, at an early period, an extraneous aim for imitation and exertion, such as preparation for a certain calling or sphere of activity.

But, to the child, even a trivial plaything can be a new discovery; for this reason the child examines the object on all sides; he tears and breaks it; he puts it in his mouth and bites it. The child would know the inner nature of the thing. So, play is the highest phase of child development at this period.

Every thing and every being comes to be known only as it is connected with the opposite of its kind. For example, my Second Gift consists of the ball, cube, and cylinder. The ball and cube are clear contrasts; they represent the one and the many, rest and motion, straight and curved. They find their connection in the cylinder, which has one curved face on which it moves, and many straight faces on which it rests.

Education should both correspond to "the nature of the child" and satisfy "the definite requirements of the stage of human cultivation." Therefore, first, the means of employment are founded on the nature of man as an existent, living, and perceptive being. The whole of plays and occupations has by no means originated with me arbitrarily; but it is actually, in all logical consequence, called forth, and given by the stage of development of life." For example, the stick play for five years old children is by no means arbitrarily or accidentally introduced to the children. Stick play should not begin before the child has obtained a certain power and capacity as the requisite preparation for it. His employment with this play at this premature stage will bring him more injury than gain. Because of his undeveloped weak power, he can accomplish nothing with this means of play. Therefore, to me this is not appropriate at all.

We do not, however, wish by this hint to have it understood that these gifts are the best. We rather believe and wish that words might be found capable of being sung and yet better suited to the end in view, more closely uniting the child and play, yet more fully comprising the life of the child and the object of play, and that such words may be kindly communicated to us for the better fostering of the child's life and given wider circulation.

And during the period of childhood, the objects of the external world are intimately connected with the word, and through the word with the human being. This period, therefore, is pre-eminently the period of development of the faculty of speech. In all the child did, it was so indispensable that whatever he did should be clearly and definitely designated by the word, connected with the word. Every object, every thing became such, as it were, only through the name, as it were, created the thing for the child; hence the name and the thing seemed to be one.

When the child learns to separate the name from the thing, and the thing from its name, the speech from the speaker, and vice versa; when, later on, language itself is externalized and materialized in signs and writing, and begins to be considered as something actually corporeal, man leaves the period of childhood and enters the period of boyhood in which instruction predominates.

In teaching children number or language, the mother's pleasantly playful manner is very important. For example, the mother leads her child to a knowledge of the members which he can not see, the nose, the ears, the tongue, and teeth. She gently pulls the nose or ear, as if she meant to separate them from head of face, and, showing to the child the half-concealed end of her finger or thumb, says, "Here I have the ear, the nose," and the child quickly puts his hand to his ear or nose, and smiles with intense joy to find them in their right places. All this tends to lead the child to self-consciousness, to reflection about himself in the approaching period of boyhood. Thus, a boy ten years old, similarly guided by instinct, believing himself unobserved, soliloquized: I am not my arm, nor my ear; all my limbs and organs I can separate from myself, and I still remain myself; I wonder what I am; who and what this is which I call myself?

Do not tell the child in words much more than he could find himself without your words. Our words, our discourses in social life, are dull, are empty husks. Our speech is so empty and meaningless because it is not born from a life, in seeing and doing; because our speech, our word, is made up of memorized ideas and not based on the perception of the thing it designates. Therefore, we hear the sound, it is true, but we fail to get the image; we hear the noise, but see no movement.

However, the child, the boy, man, indeed, should know no other endeavor but to be at every stage of development wholly what this stage calls for. It is especially needful to consider this in the development and cultivation of human activity for the pursuits of practical industry. The young, growing human being should, therefore, be trained early for outer work, for creative and productive activity.

My experience had taught me that the method of education hitherto in use, especially where it involved learning by rote, and where it looked at subjects simply from the outside or historically, and considered them capable of apprehension by mere exercise work, dulled the edge of all high true attainment, of all real mental insight, of all genuine progress in scientific culture, of self-contemplation, and thus of all real knowledge, and of the acquisition of truth through knowledge.

I am firmly convinced that the whole former educational system, even that which had received improvement, ought to be exactly reversed, and regarded from a diametrically opposite point of view--namely, that of a system of development. I want to train up free-thinking, independent men. Education in instruction and training, originally and in its first principles, should necessarily be passive, following, guarding and protecting, not prescriptive, categorical, interfering. However, the prescriptive, interfering education can be justified only on two grounds: either because it teaches the clear, living thought, self-evident truth, or because it holds up a life whose ideal value has been established in experience. All prescriptions should be adapted to the pupil's nature and needs, and secure his co-operation.

My task is to educate man in his true humanity, to educate man in his absolute being, according to the universal laws of all development. And my educational goal can be reached by symmetrical development of both body and spirit of children.

At present the popular notions of work and the pursuits of practical industry are wholly false, superficial, untenable, oppressive, debasing, devoid of all elements of life. God creates and works productively in uninterrupted continuity. I believe that religion without industry, without work, is liable to be lost in empty dreams, worthless visions, idle fancies. Similarly, work or industry without religion degrades man into a beast of burden, a machine. So, work and religion must be simultaneous.

Father, parents, let us see that our children may not suffer from similar deficiencies. Let us learn from our children, let us give heed to the gentle admonitions of their life, to the silent demands of their minds. The child will be our guide and teacher.

The nature of man is in itself good. Man is by no means naturally bad, nor has he originally bad or evil qualities and tendencies; unless we consider as naturally evil, bad, and faulty the finite, the material, the transitory, the physical as such, and the logical consequences of the existence of these phenomena that man must have the possibility of failure in order to be good and virtuous.

Man, as an earthly phenomenon, is destined to have body and soul developed consciously and rationally, with a certain degree of symmetry and harmony. If man could only reach a clear and distinct knowledge of his nature, he would immediately throw off all shortcomings, and even the manifestation of all evil that is in him and done by him.

Hence the only and infallible remedy for counteracting any shortcoming and even wickedness is to find the originally good side of the human being that has been repressed, disturbed, or misled into the shortcoming, and then to foster, build up, and properly guide this good side. Thus the shortcoming will at last disappear, although it may involve a hard struggle against habit, but not against original depravity in man; and this is accomplished so much the more rapidly and surely because man himself tends to abandon his shortcomings, for man prefers right to wrong."

Ellen Key (1849-1926): "Filled with sad memories or eager hopes, people waited for the turn of the century, and as the clock struck twelve, felt innumerable undefined forebodings. They felt that the new century would certainly give them only one thing: peace. They felt that those who are laboring to-day would witness no new development in that process of change to which they had consciously or unconsciously contributed their quota.

The events at the turn of the century caused the new century to be represented as a small naked child, descending upon the earth, but drawing himself back in terror at the sight of a world bristling with weapons, a world in which for the opening of the century there was not an inch of free ground to set one's foot upon. Many people thought over the significance of this picture; they thought how in economic and in actual warfare all the lower passions of man were still aroused; how despite all the tremendous development of civilization in the century just passed, man had not yet succeeded in giving to the struggle for the existence nobler forms. Certainly to the question why this still is so, very different answers were given. Some contented themselves with declaring, after consideration, that things must remain just as they are, since human nature remains the same; that hunger, the propagation of the race, the desire for gold and power, will always control the course of the world. Others again were convinced that if the teaching which has tried in vain for nineteen hundred years to transform the course of the world could one day become a living reality in the souls of men, swords would be turned into pruning hooks.

My conviction is just the opposite. It is that little will be different in the mass except in so far as human nature itself is transformed, and that this transformation will take place, not when the whole of humanity becomes Christian, but when the whole of humanity awakens to the consciousness of the "holiness of generation." This consciousness will make the central work of society the new race, its origin, its management, and its education; about these all morals, all laws, all social arrangements will be grouped. This will form the point of view from which all other questions will be judged, all other regulations made. Up to now, we have only heard in academic speeches and in pedagogical essays that the training of youth is the highest function of a nation. In reality, in the family, in the school, and in the state, quite other standards are put in the foreground...

The thought of development not only throws light on the course of the world that lies behind us, continued through millions of years, with its final and highest point in man, it throws light, too, on the way we have to travel over; it shows us that we physically and psychically are ever in the process of becoming....

Goethe showed long ago in his Werther a clear understanding of the significance of individualistic and psychological training, an appreciation which will mark the century of the child. In this work, he shows how the future power of will lies hidden in the characteristics of the child, and how along with every fault of the child an uncorrupted germ capable of producing good is enclosed. "Always," he says,

> *I repeat the golden words of the teacher of mankind, 'if ye do not become as one of these', and how, good friend, those who are our equals, whom we should look upon as our models, we treat as subjects; they should have no will of their own; do we have none? Where is our prerogative? Does it consist in the fact that we are older and more experienced? Good God in Heaven! Thou seest old and young children, nothing else. And in whom Thou hast more joy, Thy Son announced ages ago. But people believe in Him and do not hear Him-that, too, is an old trouble, and they model their children after themselves.*

The same criticism might be applied to our present educators, who constantly have on their tongues such words as evolution, individuality, and natural tendencies, but do not heed the new commandments in which they say they believe. They continue to educate as if they believed still in the natural depravity of man, in original sin, which may be bridled, tamed, suppressed, but not changed. The new belief if really equivalent to Goethe's thoughts given above, i.e., that most every fault is but a hard shell enclosing the germ of virtue. Even men of modern times still follow in education the old rule of medicine, that evil must be driven out by evil, instead of the new method, the system of allowing nature quietly and slowly to help itself, taking care only that the surrounding conditions help the work of nature. This is education."

Elizabeth Peabody (1804-1894): "I am struck with the fact that, sure enough, we are dwelling in the dawning light of those truths which make up the character forming portion of your system, Herr Froebel, - truths which both Dr. Channing and you make use of like Jesus Christ, to counteract the despair inherited from the old Pagan doctrine, of naked sovereignty as the essence of God. You both affirmed that the true human life is a constant growth - instinctively divining that an education which recognizes every human being as self-active and even creative, in his own moral and intellectual nature, must be fatal, in the end to all despotic governments.

You have discovered the eternal laws which organize human nature on the one side and the material universe on the other. Any child can learn anything, if time and opportunity is given to go step by step. I think no considerations should hinder us from cultivating to the highest degree circumstance will possibly allow of, our intellectual abilities.

Emerson says the intellect is a sensibility and this involves that the heart is apprehension. The heart knows our immortality, our infiniteness, the intellect, our finiteness. Therefore, education must begin with the heart to do justice to our moral nature, which is the product of our personality.

What breath is to the material body, making man alive in nature, language is to the social body, making it alive in history. Smiles and sounds, proceeding out of the mouth are the first languages and begin to fix the little child's eyes and attention upon the mouth of the mother, from which issue the tones that are sweetest to hear, and especially when in musical cadence. Language is no function of the individual, but only of the conscious social being yearning to find himself in another. Nothing is permanently remembered which does not touch the heart of interest, the imagination.

I have finally convinced Mr. Milton Bradley to manufacture some of the needed kindergarten materials. However, the interest of manufacturers and of merchants in the gifts and materials is a snare. It has already corrupted the simplicity of Froebel in Europe and American - for the idea was to use elementary forms exclusively, and simple materials - as much as possible of these being prepared by the children themselves. And the Germanic songs and games, so beneficial to the English turn of mind. The rich slow-moving melodies would force Americans to pause at times in our rush of life and allow ourselves to feel the mystery and the prophesies that hang around the sacred hour of childhood.

Childish play has all the main characteristics of art, in as much as it is the endeavor to conform the outward show of things to the desires of the mind. And yet, one parent recently wrote to me, "I think children must learn soon that play is not the end of life, but that nothing really worth having is got without work, and little by little they will learn to take their share, and I don't think it hurts them....". What I mean to say is, that the kindergarten play, as long as it lasts, is play, it puts off the time of work.

The loving mother is the first word of Herr Froebel's gospel of child culture, you know. The deepest reason why a child should be taken care of in its earliest infancy by its mother is that only a mother can respect a child's personality sufficiently. When the age for the kindergarten comes, the mother needs to be relieved of the increasing care; and children need other influences than can be had in a family, especially in families where parents have work to do outside of their homes. It is indeed, a consummation devoutly to be wished that time may come when labor may be so organized that no mothers may be obliged to leave their children's souls uncared for in order to get the wherewithal to sustain their bodies.

The idea that women are less capable of the highest education in literature and science and of authorship on any subject, truly never entered my mind. As my friend Baroness Marenholtz-Bulow claimed, "With the elevation of child-nature, the elevation of woman and her veritable emancipation are closely bound up." The science of the mother initiates her inevitably into a higher branch of knowledge, whereby not mere dry intellectual power, but true sensibility and high spiritual clear-sightedness are developed in her. With the knowledge that a divine spark slumbers in the little being on her lap, there must kindle in her a holy zeal and desire to fan this spark into a flame, and to educate for humanity a worthy citizen. With this vocation of educator of mankind is bound up everything needful to place woman in possession of the full rights of a worthy humanity.

The kindergarten is, after all, a necessary adjunct to family nurture because a mother with more than one child lacks time and energy to properly care for them. The four year old should be handed over to matronly kindergartens who possess both the innate feminine penchant for tender nurture and a knowledge of Froebelian pedagogy. If the home was a divine abode and the family eminently God's institution which nothing should be allowed to mar, then the kindergarten should reflect these facts by steadily fulfilling the family's divinely prescribed nurturant role.

I convinced my friend Bronson Alcott's daughter, Louisa May to open a kindergarten, which she did, but then quit as she discovered it did not pay. I call that a poor spirited teacher with avowedly mercenary ends. I do not say to any particular person, it is your duty to wear yourself out and half starve, for the sake of keeping a kindergarten. It is only those who are sufficiently free from other obligations to give themselves the privilege and luxury of working with God, on the paradisical ground of childhood, who should enter this field.

Scripture history is the most important subject that can engage our attention, as evolving both temporal and eternal interests. Education must be moral, intellectual and spiritual, as well as physical, from the very beginning of life. And art is the image in man of God's creativeness. Children are led on to act from their own thoughts with only suggestions from the teacher.

I like to emphasize the transcendence of the spiritual domain. Teaching, is the a-priori process of drawing out into the individual consciousness of a child those latent powers whose free activity gives him conscious relations, first with his kind; secondly with material nature, including his own body, and thirdly with God. The kindergarten must succeed by complementing the nursery; and the child begin to take his place in the company of his equals, to learn his place in their companionship and still later to learn wider social relations and their involved duties. We can only understand the child and what we are to do for it in the kindergarten by understanding the first stage of its being--the pre-intellectual one in the nursery. The body is the first garden in which God plants the human soul, to dress and to keep it."

Jan and Chelsea: We have evoked the voices of long dead commentators and theorists of education from the turn of the century in order to ask you to consider the ideas and messages of that time and how they remain with us today. We would like to tease out several ideas that haunt these historical texts.

-What ideas resonate in these texts?
-What can you tell about how these educator/philosophers approached the concepts of time and play?
-How does the language in Act I reflect the time from which it originated?
-How have these concepts remained with us?
-Sentimental. Reformist. Utilitarian. Standards-Based. Embodied. How are these ideas/personalities present in these texts?

Act II
The Imperial Empiricist and Super Hero Play

The Imperial Empiricist and Super Hero Play re-enacts, against a back drop of child development research, the relatively recent, 1990's opposition between the empirically informed advocates of developmentally appropriate practice and the critically informed early childhood reconceptualists (that would be us!) Note that as the battle rages, each side remains unable to acknowledge the other's position, nor to recognize the arbitrary fixedness of their own. Both sides believe the truth is still out there, somewhere, they just can't agree on what it is. And as in all super hero play, the fighting is never over!

Jan (monotone voice reading): Empirical studies of child object and representational play have defined a normative trajectory of development that follows a more than less universal course, in large measure maturational and progressive in nature. In broad outline, children first engage in exploratory play actions which are tied more closely to real and tangible properties of objects and later in symbolic play actions which engage representational capabilities. More specifically, very young children's' object play initially is predominantly characterized by sensorimotor manipulation whose aim is to extract information about objects, what perceivable qualities objects possess, what they do, and what immediate effects they can produce. Exploratory actions might first be directed towards a single object and later incorporate combinations of two or more objects inappropriately or appropriately. Eventually, children's play actions with objects reveal symbolic qualities. Play begins to represent experience and becomes generative as children enact activities performed by self, others, or even objects in increasingly complex scenarios. Symbolic play repertoires include simple pretense about self (e.g., pretending to drink from and empty toy cup) and about others (e.g., putting a doll to sleep), as well as sequences of pretense (e.g., pouring into an empty cup and then pretending to drink), and they even included substitutions in pretense (e.g., pretending to talk into a block as though it were a cellular telephone). In short, play reflects a salient everyday venue for the expression of both exploratory and symbolic thinking in the young child. (For a more complete background to object play development, see Belsky & Most, 1981; Bornstein & Lamb, 1992; Bornstein & O'Reilly, 1993; Bornstein, et al. 1999, pp. 317-318; Howes, 1992; MacDonald, 1993; McCune-Nicolich, 1981; Piaget, 1962; Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983; Sigman & Sena, 1993; Tasmin-LeMonde & Bornstein,1996).

Chelsea (spiritedly): In 1987, following a lengthy and thoughtful process that involved the solicitation of input and feedback from literally thousands of early childhood practitioners, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published guidelines (Bredekamp, 1987) reflecting the profession's "consensus definition of developmentally appropriate practice" in programs serving children from birth through age 8 (New & Mallory, 1994, p.1).

Jan: "We have to do something about this DAP[1] thing, you know," Shirley remarked to me as we shared a cup of coffee in a French Quarter sidewalk cafe. We were attending an American Educational Research Association (AERA) meeting and had slipped out of a session to 'debrief' and to complain of how difficult it was to gain access to the 'early childhood establishment.' We did not even imagine that the seeds of our resistance were planted in the Louisiana sun that day.

Chelsea: In spite of the good intentions of these aims, the document has come under increasing scrutiny. In fact, one of its features that has contributed to its popularity may also have invited controversy. The published guidelines state - in behaviorally specific terms - a thesis about what constitutes appropriate early childhood practices as well as an antithetical listing of practices deemed inappropriate (New & Mallory, 1994, p.1).

Jan: When educators rely on psychologists for their knowledge base, they may be avoiding difficult philosophical and social issues while believing themselves to be acting in a "professional" manner. They also may be succumbing to a subtle, but nonetheless potent, form of technical mindedness because they are taking educational decision making out of the realm or moral and political consideration, where it more properly belongs. Early educators are particularly vulnerable to this form of instrumental rationality because they tend to regard themselves as objective, if well-intentioned, protectors of the young and because they are members of a low status field seeking to improve its position in a society that places primacy on scientific knowledge.

Chelsea: The assumption that child development knowledge is essential for early childhood teachers emerged in a survey conducted in England (Early Childhood Education Research Project, 1994). The majority of head teachers (principals) representing every type of early childhood setting ranked "knowledge of child development" as the single most influential contributor to the professional development of practitioners who work with children under 8 years of age. (Katz, 1996, pp. 135-136)

Jan: Notions of normality are extrapolated from our attention to those children who worry the courts, teachers, doctors, and parents. Normality is not an observation but a valuation. It contains not only a judgment about what is desirable, but an injunction as to a goal to be achieved. In so doing, the very notion of ' the normal' today awards power to scientific truth and expert authority. Psychology has played a key role in establishing the norms of childhood, in providing means for visualizing childhood pathology and normality, in providing vocabularies for speaking about childhood subjectivity and its problems, in inventing technologies for cure and normalization. The soul of the young citizen has become the object of government through expertise.

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[1] 'Developmentally Appropriate Practice' (DAP), as described in the document published by the National Association of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987), delineates both age-appropriate and inappropriate practices in the education of young children. Based on research in child development, the DAP document became the focus of much criticism of both the inappropriate and sometimes inaccurate use of psychological research in educational contexts (Canella, 1997) and the application of such research across cultural contexts (Jipson, 1991).

Chelsea: Challenges such as these undermine the classic argument put forth by Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) in "Development as the Aim of Education," one of the best known rationales for constructing early childhood programs that pursue the course of development (Goffin, 1996, p.123).

Jan: The reconceptualist movement represented by this group of early childhood educators emerged for several reasons. Perhaps initially one of the most compelling was the practical desire of this group of scholars to find a site for the active discussion and dissemination of their work and for the sharing of research which seemed to fall outside the psychologically driven parameters of the Society for Research in Child Development or the Early Childhood Special Interest Group (SIG) of AERA. Also significant was the belief that scholarly work grounded in a critical perspective was both practically and theoretically estranged from the conventions of the early childhood education community and its professional associations. Recognizing their shared commitment to a re-analysis of the conditions through which many children and their families are positioned outside the dominant discourse of development and education, the reconceptualist researchers sought opportunities for dialogue and collaboration in applying feminist, critical, multicultural, post-colonial and postmodern theories and methodologies to questions of early childhood curriculum, research, and theorizing. In the end, what connected us was our shared commitment to creating social change and improving the lives of children.

Chelsea: It seems to me that the main distinction between development and change is that when we study and discuss child development we are by definition - even if only implicitly - concerned about an "end state," or an ultimate mature or final state of some kind, and how early experience contributes to later functioning and that ultimate end state (Katz, 1996, p. 137).

Jan: What are some of the problems associated with unquestioned use of Piagetian constructivism as a basis for early education practice? These include, but are not limited to, the following: (a) the theory is normative; (b) it privileges abstract (logico-mathematical), decontextualized thought; (c) the individual child remains the unit of analysis, and (d) the theory is a cultural construction that reifies dominant cultural practices, including a stratified social order (Lubeck, 1996, p.156).

Chelsea: (turns her back to J.) As developmentalists have become more aware of the ways in which individual behavior is socially and culturally organized, they, too, have begun to diminish their search for laws of development that apply across all circumstances (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bruner & Haste, 1987; Cole & Cole, 1989; Elder, Modell, & Parke, 1993; Rogoff & Morelli, 1989). There is increasing recognition that major theories in developmental psychology have "gathered an assembly of vastly different children" (White, 1983b, p. 28) tied to changing cultural notions of childhood (Goffin, 1996, p.123).

Jan: Encouraged by the interest in our perspective, and utilizing theories and methods of feminism, postmodernism, and critical theory, we persisted in our examination of curricular questions of what knowledge and experiences were of most worth for young children (including but not constrained to issues of development), and of questions concerning the meaning of knowledge to the individual knower and the concomitant cultural and social interests that constitute the experienced curriculum.

Chelsea: The teachers surveyed ranked "knowledge of school subjects" relatively low as a factor in the competence of early childhood practitioners. Even the heads of schools for statutory (compulsory) age children rated knowledge of school subjects lower in importance to teaching competence than knowledge of child development (Katz, 1996, p. 136).

Jan: (turns her back on C.) The on-going reconceptualization of early childhood education is, at its very center, a process of reflection and realignment across multiple, intersecting terrains - those of identity, both of the child and of the early childhood professional; those of curriculum, both in its development and in its enactment; and those of social context and of social responsibility. Central to each of these, and to much of contemporary early childhood theorizing, has been the assumption that knowledge of the world takes the form of firm and steady truths that can be directly accessed through one's senses - by observation and experimentation (Beyer & Bloch, 1996) but often without reference to social, historical, or cultural contexts.

Chelsea: Miller (1983) asserted that: "What is critical about developmental theory is that it focuses on change over time. Although developmental theories have nondevelopmental theoretical concepts such as id, mental representation, attention, and drive, they diverge from nondevelopmental theories by emphasizing changes over time in these concepts." These definitions suggest that when we use the term child development we are invoking a set of concepts, principles, and facts that explain, describe the account for the processes involved in change from immature to mature status and functioning (Katz, 1996, p.137).

Jan: Traditional perspectives assume we can have 'knowledge' of the developing child and of the designated and acceptable roles of the teacher, mother, child care worker, etc. and thus we can have understandings of what constitutes an 'appropriate' teaching practice or a standard and often standardized curriculum; can develop routinized methodologies for conducting early childhood research (Jipson, 1999); and can have prescriptions and programs for child advocacy and educational reform, all of which assume certain universal regularities in the child's personal and educational worlds.

Chelsea: I suspect now that much of the contentiousness in recent discussions of developmentally appropriate practice is related to unacknowledged differences among us in (a) our conceptions of the ultimate goals of development and (b) our assumptions about how they are best achieved for children growing up on significantly different present environments, and who are expected to be competent in unknowable future environments. (Katz, 1996, p. 139)

Jan: Researchers such as Jeffrey Lewis (1995), in analyzing current research in developmental psychology and early education, challenge the notion of developmental regularities, pointing out that the existence of 'universal' and 'immutable' stages of child development (Bredekamp, 1987; Mallory & New, 1994) is contradicted by contemporary cross-cultural research in psychology and anthropology. Lewis critiques the current focus on individual development, independence, and cognitive learning, citing LeVine's (1991) characterization of theories of child development as 'cultural scripts' and 'folk theories.' Valerie Walkerdine (1984) has also critiqued the notion of the universality of research-based developmental psychology, arguing that "developmental psychology is premised on a set of claims to truth which are historically specific and which are not the only or necessary way to understand children" (p. 154).

Chelsea: If, however, the main problem among early childhood educators was simply our different conceptions of the ultimate goals of development, the links between child development knowledge and teacher preparation could simply be argued on the basis of diverse cultural expectations and preferences, rather than on whether this particular branch of knowledge is an appropriate basis for making decisions about curriculum and teaching methods (Katz, 1996, p. 139).

Jan: Early childhood educators working within the frame of critical theory have offered the strongest resistance to traditional perspectives in early childhood education, noting that because of inherent assumptions about knowledge and truth, many early childhood educators have failed to recognize the social and cultural values inherent in curricular decision making and thus have failed to consider whose interests are served by the curricula they employ (Jipson. 1991; Kessler, 1992). From the perspective of critical theory, most curricula reflects the particular, usually Western and middle class, social, historical and cultural traditions upon which it is based. The imposition of any particular curriculum thus reproduces classed, raced, and gendered distortions in its representation of the world.

Chelsea: The main question seems to me to be the extent to which our current child development knowledge is reliable and generalizable enough to serve as a basis for predicting the course of development of all the children we serve (Katz, 1996, p. 145).

Jan: In addition to the notions about childhood that early childhood educators bring from their own experiences as children, they are influenced by their individual beliefs about what is important for children to know, about what children are able to do, and about what meanings children's activities have for them. These personal beliefs are grounded in the specificities of each educator's own historical, social and cultural traditions. Furthermore, understandings of early childhood education are influenced by competing social constructions of the young child (Cannella, 1997; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998) as an object of adult attention and care, as a developmentally maturing organism, and as unequally able to participate in rational problem solving or adult discourse may constrain…

Chelsea: (interrupting) It may be easy for us to accept the proposition that conceptions of the desired ends of development are bound by culture, it is more difficult to acknowledge and accept the proposition that the concept of development itself is a product of culture and that all concepts are cultural products, including the concept of culture itself. However, if we pursue this line of reasoning, we quickly reach a state of infinite regress and of reasoning backward to a point where we can become conceptually paralyzed and incapacitated (Katz, 1996, pp. 142-143).

Jan: Constructions of childhood and of early childhood programs, which emanate primarily from Euro-American cultural experience, serve to impose both limitations and expectations on children and their teachers, actively reproducing dominant Euro-American patterns, relationships, and behaviors. In the end, both the representations of childhood constructed by educators in their minds and in their expectations and the representations of the world constructed by educators through their curricula determine what the experience of early childhood education is. Thus, while seemingly based on 'objective,' psychological research, contemporary perspectives on early childhood curriculum and on the institution of early childhood education carry multiple alternate and impressionistic representations of childhood which serve to inscribe power and privilege in specific ways, thus creating particular social texts and engendering particular educational possibilities.

Chelsea: Given our nation's value of scientifically derived solutions to societal problems (Silin, 1987; Zuckerman, 1987) and its concomitant undervaluation of children as public responsibility (Grubb & Lazerson, 1988), early childhood advocacy framed in terms of predictable and achievable child development outcomes provides an important lever for arguing the inadequacy of many existing early childhood education settings and for promoting the importance of better prepared and compensated personnel - child development knowledge provides a concrete frame of reference for improving classroom practice (Goffin, 1996, p. 125).

Jan: Knowledge must always be [re]viewed in the context of its constitution. By resisting and interrogating readily apparent forms of knowledge, critically informed researchers assert that what appears to be 'objective reality' is actually what one's mind constructs based on its prior experience. Forms of knowledge, once constructed, must be examined from a cultural and historical perspective in terms of their role or potential within social evolution.

Chelsea: The "analysis paralysis" that may result from this line of reasoning is not likely to be helpful for teachers, even if it makes good material for scholarly exchange! (Katz, 1996, p. 143).

Jan: From a critical perspective, knowledge is also valued in terms of its potential to contribute to progressive social change and social justice and is thereby a representation of resistance to dominant perspectives. Critically informed educators assert that the knowing individual can shape and re-shape the world through her/his instrumental action, through symbolic and communicative activity, and through the dialectical interplay between the two. In the case of research with young children this would involve both children's actions, in work and play, and their understandings of their activity, within the historical, cultural, and social context in which they live.

Chelsea: We often cite the importance of preparing children to participate in a democratic society as an important criterion for designing curriculum and pedagogical practices. Indeed, preparation for democracy may be one of the very few goals educators can still agree on. - However, if we do not know enough about the relationships between early experience and the ultimate competencies necessary for effective participation in democratic processes, how can we design appropriate educational practices? (Katz, 1996, p. 141).

Jan: Believing that knowledge and values are fundamentally inter-related, critically informed educators focus their concern on the emancipatory or repressive potential of knowledge. They assert that knowledge can never be neutral or disinterested, and that notions of 'truth' are always tied to values. Furthermore, critically informed educators recognize that knowledge is unequally distributed and that knowledge-makers inevitably use their knowledge to enhance their own status and to support their own interests.

Chelsea: DAP has become familiar rhetoric in reports commissioned by businesses seeking high-quality early childhood programs to help ensure the competence of their future labor force and by educational associations committed to educational reform. Advocates for developmentally appropriate practice were recently credited with leading the battle against the inappropriate use of achievement tests in the early grades (Goffin, 1996, pp. 125-126).

Jan: Since critically informed educators believe that the world is socially constructed and shaped by human action, they believe it can also be re-shaped and trans-formed through human action. In resisting dominant forms of knowledge production and knowledge which privileges particular ways of knowing and being, the critically informed educator begins with a commitment to intersubjective understanding and the continual examination of boundaries which may enable or constrain relations of power related to discourse, culture, location, and subjectivity. In working with young children, this involves identifying how children's understanding and subjectivity are shaped through their interactions with each other and with adults. It also involves considering the historical and social situatedness of the discourses that frame and colonize their experiences and serve to position and represent them in particular ways. Thus, critically informed early childhood educators must repeatedly consider the local, partial, and contingent nature of their discourse with and about children - and the representations they create.

Chelsea: (shrugs shoulders, walks off and sits down).

Jan. (keeps on talking, ignoring C.) By grounding early childhood education in the experiences of children and by recognizing that subjective understandings are partially determined by context, early childhood educators can develop an awareness of how their own understandings may also have been distorted or repressed through the process of their own resistance and reflection.

[Looking at this dialogue, we see that:]

> Both talk the language of politics and power,
> though the former is concerned with the relationship of schooling to society
> and the latter with the relationship among professional groups.
> Jonathan Silin

Here we see authority and righteousness, whether it is moral, scientific, or critical played out. We ask you again to think of children, playing, taking on the role of the aggressor, protector, mediator, victim, problem solver, acting through these roles with their benefits and losses. Through the lens of progressive development, we can view children's dramatic playing, the trying on of these roles, as experimentation and preparation for adult life. But we ask you to consider the following:

What if we were to shrink the temporal gulf between adult and child emotional experience, do away with theories of emotion development per se, but consider rather that children's emotional engagements are no more dramatic than our adult interactions (drama here meaning a theatrical distance from a distinct future or present "real" life). Perhaps in our adult posturing around power and control in the classroom, we are practicing for some future life in which we can be fair, reasonable, not hit each other and see the other's point of view. We are not arguing that children's passionate reactions should be taken more seriously (though we wouldn't mind that); we are also not arguing that adult passionate reactions should viewed as more childish (although the humor of that is not lost here). We are proposing instead that by imaging children's lives and adult lives as located in temporally and spatially different locations (i.e. children located within time in childhood, adults in adulthood; classrooms as child-space, conferences as adult space), we run the risk of losing the continuity, confluence even of the meanings of power and the passionate engagements it invokes (desire, envy, pleasure, loss, excitement, satisfaction) that go along with it.

In light of these ideas, we would like you to consider the following questions-

-Do the changes in the physical body from birth to adulthood too strongly imply a linear growth model for other areas of human experience?

-Are differences between adult and child experience "real"? (perception)

-What are the limitations to viewing our experiences as different?

-What do we gain from viewing these as different? (power)

-Can we imagine that they are both different and the same? (concept of both/and)

-How do our arguments of curriculum and philosophy represent different visions of the future and different visions of children as adults (child as future)?

-What are the limitations to the continuation of such polarized arguments? (binaries)

-What is important about fighting for your position? (activism)

-Could we imagine a both/and position in response to these arguments that could exploit, unsettle, and imagine outside these dichotomies?

Act III:
Passion Play:
The Embodiment of Early Childhood

In *Act III: Passion Play: The Embodiment of Early Childhood* the neat, sometimes positivistic and oppositional rhetoric of early childhood education - of history or child psychology, of developmentally appropriate practice, of critical theory - begins to unravel into a more highly emotive narrative of the sentimental and the sensual. It is the underside of early childhood education, the often unacknowledged, sometimes disparaged narrative of intimacy, the emotional, the personal, the worlds of mother and child, teacher and child. But it is also the physical, sometimes sexually charged world of the body, or of no-touch.

This act is confessional - a letter to a daughter, a diary entry, a secret shared with a friend, a nightmare or a dream. In contrast to our history plays of Act I with its authoritative pronouncements of the truth of early childhood education and of Act II with its contentious debates between the psychologically informed advocates of developmentally appropriate practice and the critically oriented reconceptualists, Act III can be read as the romance of early childhood education.

Chelsea: (reading aloud)

Dear Isabelle,

You don't even know me yet, and I am already making you part of my work. Well, to look at you and to see us together, I don't think anyone would ever think you weren't already part of my work in the deepest sense. You have been in the world for eight months and in my world for seventeen months; what do you think of everything so far? Is it bright and loud and smelly? I think so. It is strange that this is the first letter I have written you because I had imagined that I would write to you all the time, just to make sure you knew all my stories and secrets.

I have remained silent for so long because I know that you understand these things already. It is only for others that I write this letter, so that I can help them understand what I believe all mothers and children, perhaps all parents, must know: that our stories and secrets are spoken through our breath and sweat and milk and spit and tears. Through our very skin seeps the words our mouths are too full or tired to say. I never imagined the romance of your small velvet hands running across my belly as you nurse, your body pressed against mine at night as we sleep, your screaming joy as I emerge from under the peek-a-boo blanket for the thirtieth time. There were no stories before these, no secrets, no romance. We make our stories within each living, breathing, sobbing moment.

From my first moment with children, I knew that their experiences so far exceeded any adult categorizations and descriptions that our efforts to do so were comical in their best incarnation, cruel and abusive in their worst. This critique of early childhood education had always been a driving force in my teaching with children and adults, my writing and my politics. Since I have become a mother, I am even more convinced that adults fail their children by constructing a rationalist, adult narrative for those children's experiences. The more we speak about children's experiences, the less we listen, we miss it all.

What you have taught me, my sweet baby, is the true meaning of those experiences. You have taught me that yours is a world much more alien and perverse than even those controlling adults could imagine. The singleness of your purpose and the love of your own newly emerged body would either deeply confirm their fears or completely debilitate them. I cannot know you in my rational mind; you are unknowable, unreadable through the codes of language and communication we adults have made ourselves dependent on, word junkies.

You are pure joy, consuming me and beyond my reach at the same time. I have learned to listen with my pores, finding your mouth with my milk at all hours, pressing your body close then releasing it as you search for things to climb, bite, pull, and suck. And in coming to know your body, I have learned to know mine in ways that I didn't know I could. You have, in your short moments of existence inside and outside my body, shown me the power and beauty that I had all but ignored before you were conceived.

Jan: (reading aloud)
(from Jan's journal 4/17/91)

I sit at my work table, at ease with my writing, and sensing, within me, a more contemplative mood than usual. The computer screen both reveals my words as I type and also mirrors, from the window, the blue sky and the pine trees outside. The Chinese fan on the window ledge adds dimension to the hazy view, its pink flowers in sharp relief against the forest outside, yet reflecting back the blossoming trees in the yard below. I turn to look directly, but the world I see outside my loft is too bright and crisp. I need the distortion of the screen, the overlay of white type on opaque blue surface that, when I look too closely, fades against the image of the fan.

Midwife and mother, a thousand meanings spin through my head: letting words ooze out of me rather than delivering them, full form from the outline of my data base; listening to Erik play the xylophone below, "Ghost Busters" ignored in the background, allowing his play in my space rather than orchestrating his activity to give me separate space ("I'm lonely", he says, "This is your last chance!" So I stop, share a hug, then slip back to my table, my writing). I consider my teaching; constructing syllabi, compiling readings, coordinating their learning through carefully crafted discussion questions and small group projects, positioning my students so they can figure it out for themselves.

Who performs the delivery? I've gotten away from knife and forceps teaching, pulling the ideas from them, always cognizant of my own time schedule, the sterile delivery room under my complete control. I've gone beyond natural childbirth, safely the expert in the birthing room, ready to assist 'when the time comes', with monitors and anesthetics ready, just in case. I've been trained well, a student of the sixties and the human potential movement, an early-on feminist. I'm the midwife, part of the community, trusting that things will go right, yet still there to provide support, facilitate, 'catch the baby' and ensure she is intact, healthy, warmly wrapped before she is returned to the mother for nourishing.

But what about the mother - what does she do? I am the mother, after all, and the daughter and granddaughter of many generations of mothers, who were also teachers. What does teaching mean to me as mother? I know how to mother, I've learned how to teach. With mothering comes responsibility, rules, the daily reality of tiredness and irritability. Do I want to abandon my controlled and deliberative posture as teacher-mentor-midwife? Do I also want to be their mother, involved in relationship, caring for them? Or should I just assist in the delivery and then send them home to nurture their own ideas, to be their own mothers, to care for themselves. What of my students? Do they need this relationship with me, the mothering that requires commitment on their part, too. Are they willing to take part in the struggle over control and the sharing of power, the struggle to define authority and one's position in others' lives, the struggle with voice, listening to their own voices rather than echoing mine, honoring the voices of their students, too? These students, many of whom are still also struggling with attachment and separation with their own mothers, do they need to become mothers to each other, do they even want this?

What do I want, a teacher with a life of her own, and children of her own, and ideas of her own, too? Do I want to risk the sharing, the potential for miscarriage somewhere between conception and birth - Do I want to become the donor mother, seeing my fetal inspirations implanted in some one else, giving away my pregnant ideas as they are delivered by my students? And do I want the mothering, too, the nurturance that comes with connection?

Chelsea:
Blood Chant by Linnea Johnson...

Stop saying you are a woman whose
mother tells you she does not love you. Your veins are thin,

blood inside them wanting out, wet tin, the taste
in your mouth. If my mother gave me away

either than yours is doing,
head first through the vagina the first and last squeeze

between us, why ask what causes love

if not birth between women. Stop saying

you are daughter to a woman whose baby died
when you were two; stop trying to equal his quiet,
quit her, as he did, that she might love you, too.

Where women are not loved, how can we ask
love of them? How have they berthage in their home harbor
to offer the mooring love we beat against them for?

They who gave us life, let them live.

Muscles of wet rope,
blood from our wrists on our hands, let us
give them life among us, as one of us, if not as
mothers, as women bloody as newborns, wet as orphaned ships (p.243).

Jan: 4/9/00 (from Jan's journal, again)

I read Madeline Grumet's (1988) Bitter Milk again, the part where she considers what teaching means to women. She talks about our essential bonds, as women teachers, to first our own mothers, and then to our children and discusses the meaning of these relationships to our relations with other people's children, pointing out the contradictions between our experiences of childhood and mothering and the curriculum we offer. Grumet writes:

> *Convinced that we are too emotional, too sensitive, and that our work as mothers or housewives is valued only by our immediate families, we hide it, and like Eve, forbidden to know, we keep our knowledge to ourselves as we dispense the curriculum to the children of other women (p. 28).*

Grumet argues that we need to interpret our reproductive experience (procreation and nurturance) and our productive practice (curriculum and teaching) each through the other's terms, not obliterating the differences between them but naming their contradictions and reconceiving our commitment to the care and education of children. She speaks of the distrust between mothers and teachers and suggests that "Bearing credentials of a profession that claimed the colors of motherhood and then systematically delivered the children over to the language, rules and relations of the patriarchy, teachers understandably feel uneasy, mothers suspicious" (p. 56). She suggests we must

> *make peace with the women who teach our children and acknowledge our solidarity with the mothers of other people's children if we are going to reclaim the classroom as a place where we nurture children" (p.179).*

Chelsea: The Subjective Experience of the Mother
"My baby is a miracle of perfection. Everything about her is exquisite. Happiness is being with her, caring for her. I have never known such joy (p.40)."

Jan: And I love this quote from Grumet--and also the one where she speaks to the "mothering" process of teaching:

> *Fluid and ubiquitous, housework and children have required women to accept patterns of work and time that have no boundaries...it is women who compensate for the highly rationalized and fragmented arrangements of school time and space with our own labor and effort. For those who sustain the emotional and physical lives of others, there is no time out, no short week, no sabbatical, no layoff. And so, even though we secretly respect this maternal pedagogy of ours, it seems personal to us, not quite defensible in this public place, and we provide this nurturant labor without demanding the recompense it deserves. The maternal ethos of altruism, self abnegation, and repetitive labor has denied the order and power of narrative to teachers, for to tell a story is to impose form on experience. Having relinquished our own beginnings, middles, and ends, our stories of teaching resemble soap operas whose narratives are also frequently interrupted, repetitive, and endless (p. 86-7).*

Chelsea: One minute I feel if I don't get away from this prison of a house, the demands of this baby, I'll go mad. Yet, often when I am away from her I want only to return and can't wait to see her. When I return and see her smile, I feel rapture. What is the meaning of this?

Jan: I also appreciate what Mem Fox says -"the affective just won't go away:"

> *Matters affecting the heart are far more elusive than those affecting the mind. There's no simple way to measure the role of the heart in teaching children...It can't be recorded in numbers. It can't be caught in a statistical net. It can't be pre-tested or post tested. Its subjects can't be divided into control groups because the affective aspects of any give situation are unique to the situation at the moment of its happening and cannot be replicated. Measuring such indefinables as the effects of expectations, happiness, eagerness, fondness, laughter, admiration, hope, humiliation, abuse, tiredness, racism, hunger, loneliness, and love on the development of literacy is so difficult even within ethnographic research, that to my knowledge it is attempted rarely (p. 3).*

Chelsea: When Elena went to nurse her son in the middle of the night, she said she felt as though she was going to a lover. She even bathed and made herself beautiful before going in to nurse him (p.43).

> *When Gretchen had her first child at twenty-three, she became so sexually aroused when she nursed her baby, she almost had an orgasm. After breastfeeding for two weeks, she stopped in total confusion, thinking she had become a pervert. Fortunately during her third pregnancy, Gretchen had many discussions with a member of the Nursing Mother's Counsel, who reassured her that is not abnormal for women to have sensuous feelings when they are nursing their babies. These talks made it possible for Gretchen to breast-feed her third child without becoming too anxious or overwhelmed (pp. 43-44).*

Jan: Mem Fox continues, "But the affective won't go away. It's always there, whether researchers admit it or not. The plain old fact of the matter is that teachers and children have hearts, and those hearts play an enormous part in the teaching/ learning process". (1995, 3-4).

Chelsea: From *The Double Vision of Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath*

> *I did not know the woman I would be*
> *Nor that children,*
> *two moments,*
> *would break from between my legs*
> *two cramped girls breathing carelessly,*
> *each asleep in her tiny beauty. (p.233)*

Jan: 6/18/00 (Jan's journal): Madeline Grumet, again, in **Bitter Milk** (1988):

> *There are no empty houses, only those houses our mothers left us.... We have been different too long. Separated from her, separated from each other, women in education have withheld recognition from our mothers and from each other (pp.187-192).*

Here we see mother/child time slipping together - joyous, all consuming, passionate one minute, suffocating the next. We want to suggest concepts of time and play with these sensual/sentimental images of adult-child space. Time penetrates the body. Maturational milestones, framed as time segments, mark the separations between us:

Pregnancy
Labor
Birth
Nursing/weaning

Sleeping/waking
Sitting, crawling, walking, running, toilet training, eating,
Schooling,
Leaving home

From the time they enter our bodies, we begin counting the temporal markers of their separation. And time, thus, marks our bodies - numbered, neutralized.

-Where do sexuality, sensuality, nurturance fit into early childhood education?
-In our great quest to be scientific, intellectual, and critical, have we erased the power of the visceral bonds in early childhood?
-What happens (to interactions, to curriculum, to research) when we separate ourselves from our nurturant relationships with children?
-What happens (to interactions, to curriculum, to research) when we essentialize and adulate these relationships?
-And what happens to our lives and the lives of children?

Act IV: On Changing Direction and Taking the Time to Play

The word "de-construction" is closely related to the word "analysis," which etymologically means to "undo"- a virtual synonym for "to de-construct." The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or generalized skepticism, but by the carefully teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself. It anything is destroyed in a constructive reading, it is not meaning but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. (Johnson, 1981, xiv). Cited in Brenda Marshall, Teaching the Postmodern)

In *Act IV: On Changing Direction and Taking the Time to Play* we read the transcript of our planning process - enacting certain postmodern moves although the entire play has been a postmodern production, in many ways. We enact postmodernism and early childhood in order to, yet again, illuminate and then disrupt contemporary perspectives on early childhood education. We create, we hope, non-sense or at least a tumbling, ragged sense of disequillibrium, a shifting complexity, a subjective, un-focusing, uncertainty.

Our intent here is to show without telling, to heap up ideas upon ideas, upon experience, upon vision, taking what we find along our way and making it part of our play, our playing, creating, perhaps, an emerging, non-linear experience - or not. Note the focus on representation and form rather than content. We are, in fact, hoping to portray dis-content. Note also the creation and dissolution of images rather than the replication of any perceived or even perceivable reality.

Our play here is small, partial, local - just a glimpse.

>HI JAN:
>WHAT DO YOU THINK OF SWITCHING DECONSTRUCTION (RECON MOVEMENT) TO THE SOUTH (TO COUNTER THE NORTH?) AND THE BODY TO THE EAST? WE ARE CONJURING A LOT OF METAPHORS HERE AND IT MIGHT GET CONFUSING TO KEY INTO TOO MANY.

>Hi Chelsea:
>Just got back from Chicago and graduation, sorry I missed your call.
>Here is my response to your response: I have no preference as to directions---

>WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO USE THE INHERENT GEOGRAPHICAL METAPHORS THAT GET PUT INTO PLAY

>Play? Well----lets play with this for a minute.
>First there's north-civilization (we use this), south (primitive), west (sort of like north, but possibly about progress-aggression, rather than civilization, very subtle but this time in contrast to the East).
>East signifies something like orientalism - wholeness, spirituality, internal, feminized, but not necessarily bodily, actually not body at all------spirit, aesthetic.

>SO, GIVEN ALL THAT, WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT CONNECTS AND WHAT DOESN'T. I THINK IT IS OKAY IF WE DIVERGE FROM THESE METAPHORS SINCE, FOR INSTANCE, NOTHING REALLY REFERS TO THE POST-MODERN! BUT SINCE WE ARE IN THE SOUTH, I THINK IT COULD BE INTERESTING TO SET NORTH AGAINST SOUTH.

> I am not sure what order these should go in....but I think we should start with:
Act I: 'Northern Light'?: The Historical Discourse of ECE.

>QUESTION- DO WE WANT TO FOCUS ON POST-FROEBELIAN
>HIGH-EMPIRICISM HERE?

>---no, but for the next one. I'd like to focus on 19th century discourse...the initial inventions of childhood with all of the mystic.-spiritual-romantic tradition overtones....
>I have been working alot on this one..Froebel, Peabody, Harrison, Dryden, Emerson, Thoreau...the transcendentalists (I have been doing a lot of research on the connection of the early American kindergarten to the transcendentalists).
>So, Start with Froebel's gifts and the unity stuff....as the location of play in the inventions of formal ECE (and we all know it existed before adults decided to notice it)
>I see it as several successive monologues, dry, high and mighty...... maybe with a narrator on the overhead or something---maybe not.
>I'd like to use primary source quotations from the grand dames of ece.. make if very Victorian, formal...
>this is a link to the European/Victorian roots of the Aussies...
> Ja-----and we all go down south or out west eventually and get away from it.
>And then its 'Changing Direction' to
> Western Imperialism/Empiricism and the Cultural Challenge
> or Western Colonization and the Cultural Critique or something-----
we go out west to the empirical vs the critical
>the discursive voice could be two arguing positions,
>one speaking from logic, empirical research..
>the other from social justice, etc,
>a debate ....I've been working on this one also---practically my whole life.
> By juxtaposing empirical, decontextualized quantitative research text on play with cultural critique......Jeffrey Lewis, the recon stuff, Lourdes Diaz Soto, etc.

>we bring their attention to the colonization of ece by the empiricists.
>And the (mid)Western revolution(ary War)....a kind of war of independence from Empiricism.

>SUPERHERO PLAY?

>Exactly.
>It's about Play as developmentally appropriate, but play constructs knowledge, is useful, purposeful, understood and defined according to Western psychology---
>and then we could bring in the cultural relativism stuff------EC's reconceptualist's discourse, dialectical, problematic, analytic,
>----this would be the discourse of criticality....and would encompass the DAP debates.
>So we have here the Progress narratives/combative, argumentative....positional debates of the empirical world view and the critical confrontation

> OK, READINGS: STRAIGHT FORWARD TEXTS-

>yes-----first the monologues in His Story,
>And then the arguments and debates in Imperial/Empirical/Super Hero

>DECONSTRUCTION ANTI-EMPIRICAL, BUT RATIONALIST,
  -ARGUMENTATIVE, LINEAR, PROGRESSIVE TEXTS
  -BRENDA MARSHALL SNIPPET ON DECONSTRUCTION
  -RECON/DAP DEBATES (SHIRLEY, ETC)
  -OTHER CRITICAL TEXTS
  -POLAKOW/LEAVITT DECONSTRUCTION OF EC CLASSROOMS
>I HAVE SOME STUFF ON THE REPRESSIVE NATURE OF DAP IN EM'S CLASSROOM
>I IMAGINE THIS AS A STRIPPING AWAY.

>yes...I think so

>HOW DO WE EMBODY/PERFORM THIS DIALECTICAL ARGUMENT?
>MAYBE ARGUING WITHOUT HEARING ONE ANOTHER - FACING AWAY FROM ONE ANOTHER. WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT TO JUST REENACT THE BREDEKAMP/RECON ARGUMENT FROM CHICAGO? I AM PRETTY SURE THAT SOMEONE HAS A VIDEO TAPE OF THAT.

>I think Mimi taped it at one time...I'll ask her

>OR MAYBE JUST READING THE TEXTS THAT WERE WRITTEN BACK AND FORTH IN THAT JOURNAL.
>QUESTION--- HOW DO WE WANT PLAY TO COME INTO THIS?--

>I think we use texts about play throughout....we talk of it constantly,
we just never talk about it....
>in a way, our talk is a metanarrative about ece and play...

>WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO WITH REGGIO?
DO YOU KNOW MUCH ABOUT IT?

>I know next to nothing of Reggio...except for Rich and others' critiques and the occasional gushiness of the Reggio folks (a woman who spoke to my class in CA and the Preschool of the Arts folks in Madison)...Is that a problem?
>Ugh. Lets bring Reggio in with one of the last two discourses?
>Is it sentimental?
>Is Rich's critique pomo?
>Or we could ask the conference participants to tell us where it goes? Ja.

>WHAT IS OUR VOICE IN THIS?

>I see our voices coming in the performance, the juxtaposition and finally, in the pomo piece....
>we show without telling in the first several.......
>put the discourse out there and let people see for themselves (construct their own understandings, etc. blah, blah, blah).

> HOW DO WE EMBODY/PERFORM THIS PERSPECTIVE? ARE WE STRAIGHT FORWARD OR DO WE ADD A CRITICAL EDGE TO MAKE OUR POINT?

>I don't think we have to make an overtly critical edge....let the juxtapositions of the discourses do it.

>There's the Monologues (talking to God, our eyes lifted to the sky, maybe play a background tape of inspirational music---Ava Maria?)
>Then there's the Debate (contentious, argumentative, reason in our voices (that would be you) vs passion, charging in on my white horse to save the day---do I wear a white hat?--I heard Jesse Jackson speak yesterday at commencement....like that)

> I AM IMAGINING STARTING "STRAIGHT" THEN STARTING TO DETERIORATE---

>yes, deteriorate in a way, from righteous monologue, to contentious debate,
>to sentimental-sexual-maternal confessional, ---the heartland.
>to ragged, jagged, conflicting, colliding cacophony--this stuff
>(or should the sentimental-sexual precede the rational-critical?)

>IN SOME WAYS,
>BUT WHICH DIRECTION DO WE GO NEXT? EAST OR SOUTH?

>Go to the pomo last--what ever direction that is? Or is it going to the center, the Red Center of incomprehensibility and mystery....

>Or is it going out-----coming out----going out there to the place where no (wo)man has gone before...the answer is(n't) out there.....?
>POMO space
>which has no fixed geographic place---
>it's every where.
>Anyway, I think it should be last, 'cuz we end up there and flipping back to the other places, too
> (Now that I look at this email, I think we should send it (the email) to JCT as is for a publication......or maybe read it at AERA....)

> HEADING TOWARDS DECONSTRUCTION (SOUTH) MAKES THE MOST SENSE WHEN I IMAGINE HOW THIS SECTION WILL UNFOLD,
>BUT I AM UNSURE OF HOW TO GET FROM SOUTH TO EAST (SENSUALISM/ROMANTICISM).

>Just go there. I think we just split...take off, new act, new show folks.

> SOUTH (EAST) "BODY PLAY", "FORE PLAY"? W/MUSIC?

> Is this EC as we feel it/experience it...gut stuff personal, emotional--
>a discourse of feeling, desire, nostalgia, sentimentality (maybe this could be personal reflections, our narratives, etc.)
>It's the under side...down under. gentle stories, collage of discourse, done softly, voice over--maybe your letters to your daughter, about your students. Or my grandma stuff..

> ROMANTICISM, SENSUALISM, TEXTS-
> -MAYBE SOME 1900'S ROMANTIC STUFF (ELLEN KEY?)
> -MAKING A PLACE FOR PLEASURE
> -JOE'S SEX PLAY STUFF
> -JONATHAN'S STORIES
> -RICH'S NO TOUCH
> -JAN'S STORIES
> -CHELSEA'S LETTERS
> -MAYBE SOME MOTHER/PARENT STORIES
> -DO YOU THINK THERE ARE SOME ROMANTIC/SENSUALIST TEACHER STORIES OUT THERE?

>Or we can make them up...we becoming an increasing part of authoring the discourse throughout the plays, and messing them up.....
>Oh, and also Madeline Grumet, Lila Berg, Tillie Olsen, etc.

> QUESTION- SHOULD THE STORIES BE CELEBRATORY OR REGULATORY OR MOVE FROM ONE TO THE OTHER, BACK AND FORTH, A TENSION?

> I think lyrical, narcissistic---then maybe the nasty stuff!

> MAYBE WE COULD MOVE EAST HERE BY HAVING THE BODY EMERGE FROM THE RUBBLE?
> SOMEHOW, I'M UNCLEAR.

>Do we have to enact the movement....
>may be we could do it by stripping away the discourses of ece...
>the journey is within ourselves, after all.

> So, how about this:
>Act 1, black coat and lace collar (high) and hat.
>Act 2 we strip down to pink fluffy sweaters and Madonna clothes
(or is that Act 3...I am confused as to where the sentimental-sexual should come in?)
>Act 3...we come in with our pastel suits
("like guys with ties" written on the overhead or voice over)
and our Bali/batik/Birkenstock/hippie garb...I do critical stuff and that's what I wear!
> Act 4....all black again? or what is pomo wear....
>futuristic, I guess...do you have a silver lame top?

>I HAVEN'T WORKED ON THIS AS MUCH YET.
>I AM WAITING FOR IT TO COME TOGETHER MORE-
>WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BEST EXAMPLES OF PERSPECTIVE?
>HAVE YOU STARTED READING HOUSE OF LEAVES?
>WE ARE DOING THIS PART IN OUR SMALLER GROUPS AREN'T WE?
>IT SEEMS LIKE IT SHOULD BE SOME KIND OF ACTIVITY, DON'T YOU THINK? >SOMETHING ON PLAY AND TIME.

> The "Play's the Thing?"
> EC as multiple, diffuse, complex, --two separate, simultaneous discourses.
> dislocations, continually re-positioning, complicated overlapping text,
> foreground and background keep shifting.
> Transit the landscape, transit the discourse, conquest, explore, colonize
> It's Play and the Regimes of Truth:
>The Spectrum of Reworking a field in flux.

>WE HAVE NOT YET WORKED IN THE NOTION OF TIME.
>I AM SURE THAT WE CAN,
BUT WE WILL HAVE TO GIVE IT SPECIAL CONSIDERATION
OR I THINK IT WILL GET LOST.

>we are time travelers? we don't have time to be literal (or in-time)?
>Seriously, I think this whole thing has evolved into a social critique of the field.

>I AM GOING TO START PHOTOCOPYING POSSIBLE TEXTS TO READ FROM.
> DO WE WANT TO ADD ANY OF OUR OWN TEXT, GLUE, POINTS THAT WE WANT TO MAKE?
>I GUESS THAT WILL BECOME MORE OBVIOUS AS WE GO ALONG---
>EEK, WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF TIME, SPEAKING OF TIME.

>Maybe we have been doing to much playing with this.

> YEA! VERY FUN!

>Too bad we are not on the same time zone, so to speak...
>when do you get to CA? I get there Sunday....then we'll at least be in the same state.
>And lets decide how to divide up the work so we are not xeroxing the same stuff...plus I have to go to Office Max to xerox...it is so ugly
>..so I want to only do what we need to.

>I think this will be really wild. I am so excited. I teach afternoons
and evenings all week this next week and next so lets pick a morning to talk. Jan

C: SO---WHAT DO WE DO NEXT

J: You said you wanted to deconstruct deconstruction.....but I think that is too abstract---why don't we let them figure it out themselves. Let's just ask them.....

Final Thoughts

> *Performance art usually occurs in the suspension between the "real" physical matter of "the performing body" and the psychic experience of what it is to be embodies. Like a rackety bridge swaying under too much weight, performance keeps one anchor on the side of the corporeal (the body) and one on the side of the psychic Real. Performance boldly and precariously declares that Being is performed and (made temporarily visible) in that suspended in-between.* (Peggy Phelan, 1993, p. 167).

> *How can one create a performative pedagogy in the West which refuses the acquisitive model of power-knowledge operative everywhere in institutions of higher learning? How can one invent a pedagogy for disappearance and loss and not for acquisition and control? How can one teach the generative power of misunderstanding in a way they will (almost) understand? And who are "they" anyway?* (Peggy Phelan, 1993, p. 173).

> *Is there a Truth still out there? Where are theoretical approaches derived?*

> *The goal of the postmodernists is to abolish the individual/social dualism inherent in formulations that pose a pregiven subject, one that is discrete, coherent, and existing prior to social experience. In its place they seek to define a more complex, decentered, at times contradictory subject embedded in the social world.* (Jonathon Silin, 1995).

Schooling, even nursery schooling, is one of the central ways that society organizes power and influence. Recognizing this means that early education should not be exempt from a more political analysis of its program. We need to delineate the social commitments that inevitably lie behind all our programs. Teaching needs to be viewed as more than the professionalization of a maternal function that occurs in a protective environment. It must be seen in the context of the larger societal processes that both shape and are shaped by it. Even the pedagogical acts have meaning for students that extends beyond the classroom. If teachers are to be more fully in control of their professional lives, they must assess this meaning and incorporate it into their knowledge base.

The contemporary image of childhood has been fashioned and maintained by the institutions of social science, and by a corresponding methodology that is so rooted in the epistemological universe of positivism that "for close to a century now, many psychologists have seemed to suppose that the methods of natural science are totally specifiable, that the applicability of these to social and human events is not only an established fact, but that knowledge based on inquiries not saturated with iconology of science is worthless."

What a wild ride this was!

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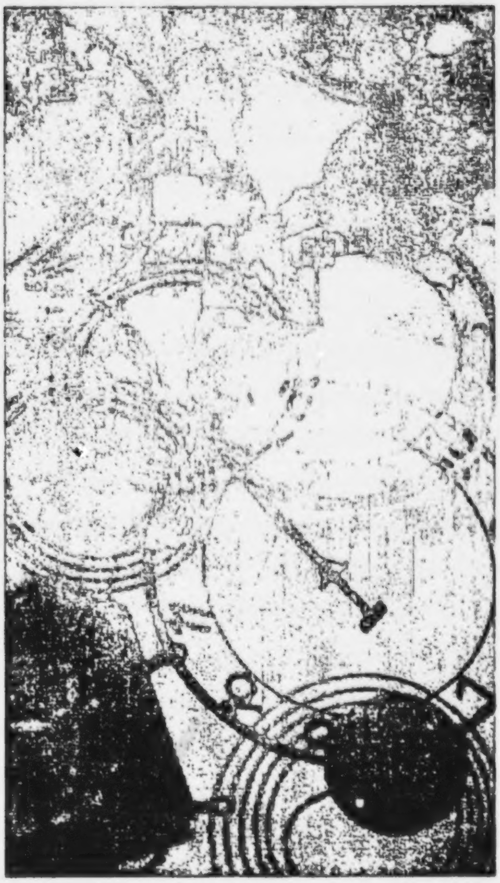
Trapped in time: Power, time and teaching

Janet Robertson



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Trapped in time: Power, time and teaching

Janet Robertson

My aim in this paper is not to unpack the minutiae of time, but to lay before you some of the complexity of the postmodern discourse about time, teaching and power. This is not a time of answers, but rather, of the big questions.

- What impact does time have on children and their childhoods?
- What impact does time and measurement have on their education?
- What sort of power is wielded in time?
- Who wields the power of time?

In postmodern thinking, we are obligated to unpack both the hidden and the obvious narratives which dominate how our society functions. But it is not quite that simple. How our society functions can be viewed from many perspectives, and each of these perspectives has its own 'truth'. It would be foolhardy and not 'postmodern' to try to establish a new truth over previous truths by just replacing one way of doing something over another, because by doing so we displace many other perspectives and ways. More, we need to think of the many ways. When I was in Reggio Emilia this April, Howard Gardner was there as well collaborating with the Reggian's on their joint research. We were invited to a public lecture he gave in the opera house. Listening to him talk about the theory building child, I wondered if I was hearing things; this did not sound like a "Reggio Child", and indeed in the question and answer session afterwards, the audience asked many piercing questions (not the Australians, jet lag had taken its toll). Many of these questions came from a very postmodern stance. Eventually Howard rather shortly dismissed these questions as sort of, 'well if we don't believe in any truths, why bother at all'. During the week, his casual dismissal of postmodern thinking was a question which was asked many times. Eventually Carlina Rinaldi spoke to the question and said, Howard Gardner is Howard Gardner, postmodern is postmodern, we are Reggio. Everything depends. As always in my work about the challenges the educational experiences in Reggio Emilia offer us, I insist we must not replace the Australian 'truths' with what is perceived as the Italian one. We must see our own practice, power and thinking with a new clarity and being to think in our, Australian, many ways. Everything depends.

And so to the discourse and perspective of time. Time is more than a tally of days or hours. Time is power. Time is all around us. It lies behind us, and before us. Time is a landscape through which we move, invisible but with bindings nonetheless. Time can be fast and slow at the same time, such as when you are on holidays: while you are away it seems like forever, then on your return it's like you were never away. Our memory is a form of time, looping back over the years; truncating reality it constructs sequences of events, which did not take place. Memories rush upon you when you smell a smell, or hear a piece of music. The act of remembering is circumnavigating time. Time can give experiences meaning.

I leave the rest of the introduction to Peter Høeg (1995) who says

> *In peoples lives, in yours and mine, there are linear time sequences, with and without beginnings and endings. Conditions and epochs that appear with or without warning, only to pass and never come round again. And there are repetitions, cycles: ups and downs, hope and despair, love and rejection, rearing up and dying away and returning again and again. And there are blackouts, time lags. And spurts of time. And sudden delays. There is an overwhelmingly powerful tendency, when people are gathered together, to create a common time. And in between all of these, every conceivable combination, hybrid and intermediate state is to be found.*
> *And, just glimpsed, incidences of eternity.* (p.233)

For me, those glimpses of eternity are when I watch clouds, feeling the earth on my back, the breeze on my face and watching thunderheads roll in. What is your glimpse of eternity? And what might children's be? Do we make time to find it?

You may ask what on earth eternity has to do with power, time and teaching? My reply is, eternity is a facet of time, and time shapes our lives. This shaping has no less an impact on children. Time to allow children to grow up, time to organize them, time to teach them and time for themselves. We as adults may feel we are in the grip of a time squeeze. How is it for children, who are powerless in the face of the juggernaut of adult constructed time?

The working title of this paper has been 'time in a rocket is different' for a while, but I would like to paraphrase it and say 'time in education is different' or maybe 'time in childhood is different' (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998). Each image we have of children is constructed within a context, and within this context, time plays an important part. Historical images of children sashaying though the centuries still resonate in our practice today, for instance the innocent child of Rousseau. Or the image of the tabla rasa where the child is a blank slate upon which we write to create the knowledge for the child (Cannella, 1999; Dahlberg, 1999; Moss, 1999). This ancient belief is still present. Echoes of it can be heard in stencils and objectives. Historical images of education resonate loudly in our schools, rows of desks, conception of teacher as the fountain of knowledge, and the day (and therefore learning) segmented into a timetable. Peter Moss (1999) quotes Freire who discusses

> *The banking concept of education in which 'knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable on those they consider know nothing*(p. 147).

Current images of the sexually vulnerable child lead to environments where children and staff must be 'compulsorily visible' (Rabinow, 1984) and where affection and kind acts are minimized to avoid allegations of abuse (Johnson 1997; Tobin 1997). So for children the past and the present, bind and influence the images of childhood they dwell within. As you know, these images influence how we provide educational experiences.

I wish to include a child's voice in the proceedings. On the cover of your folder is a collection of children's thoughts about time. I will use these as the structure for the rest of my paper, and in doing so I hope to honor the children's powerful thinking.

"Time in a rocket is different" Chris 3.7m

Chris highlights the artificiality of clock time, and date time, which is known as linear time. Again someone else can speak of the absurdity of date time Bill Bryson says,

> *Each time you fly from North America to Australia, and without anyone asking you how you feel about it, a day is taken away from you...Now I vaguely understand the principles involved here. I can see that there has to be a notional line, where one day ends and the next begins, and that when you cross that line temporal oddities will necessarily follow. But that still doesn't get away from the fact that on any trip between America and Australia you will experience something that would be, in any other circumstance, the starkest impossibility. However hard you train or concentrate or watch your diet, no matter how many steps you take on the Stairmaster, you are never going to get so fit that you can cease to occupy space for hours or be able to arrive in one room before you left the last one. All I know is that for one 24 hour period in the history of earth, it appears I had no being.* (Bryson, 2000)

In an attempt to capture and wrestle natures' time into calculations, an artificial time is created. It is absurd to drive over the border into South Australia and it is half an hour earlier, or is it later? Such anomalies are created by the act of measurement. I imagine you know about the nano second, a measurement of a part of a second, well they now have a femto second, which is a measurement of part of a nano second which is a measurement of a part of a second. It would be impossible for me to illustrate to you how short a period a femto second is, because I can't speak or do anything as fast as it takes for one to happen.

As Bill says, temporal dislocations are disconcerting. I often wonder how young toddlers, having fallen asleep out of their usual routine, feel when they wake and the world is not in the order it should be? It must be like going to sleep in front of the TV and waking half way through the next programme and finding yourself in another room, or sleeping past your stop on the train. Further to this thought, I'm reminded of something Dougal said as a young three year old, "I know something happens (when you are asleep), but I don't know what it is". He is not just remarking on the act of sleep, he is commenting on the passing of time while he is asleep.

"Go back to bed time" Gemma 3.7m

Gemma naively states a home truth here: bedtime is when an adult has put you to bed, and you are to stay there. I wonder how many "back to beds" her father says in an evening, and no doubt in the early hours of the morning? I'm not criticising her father, I'd be good at "go back to bed" too. But it illustrates how adults construct power over children, even in the most basic of bodily functions. I'm sure that Gemma is often popped into bed and she is asleep when her head hits the pillow, a moment when parental timing and child timing match. Those times when bedtime is not matching Gemma's sleep pattern or 'go back to bed times' become an exercise of power over Gemma, for I no doubt great reasons, such as her parents need time together, or work has to be done, or it is 4.30 am.

"Mummy sleeping time" Adela 3.2m

Adela's mother echo's Gemma's father, 'Mummy sleeping time' adds another dimension of "go back to bed time". However it illustrates how different children's rhythms can be from an adults. How and why you sleep according to a pattern, which is not necessarily suited to yours, is a socially constructed act. The notion that eventually Adela will need to conform to some kind of pattern which will suit more of the family than just herself embodies the world of socially constructed time. As Peter Høeg notes, eventually we cleave to a common time.

But in institutions of education, children's very basic bodily functions don't always have to cleave to common time. Too often in early childhood we use our power over children with this image of the common time foremost. It is convenient for us to have children eat at the same time, to sleep at the same time and to need toilet breaks at the same time. In Sweden, children help themselves to lunch whenever they feel like it, sleep whenever they like in child care centers. We must ensure it is not our convenience, which controls time. It is convenient to be able to write up the planning book while the children rest, but what is the child's experience of resting?

However, I'm not suggesting that children all run to totally individualized programs. Eating together is fun, a strong social construct, which is pleasurable, and a worthy goal for education. But if when and how is dictated by convenience, we must ask ourselves who is controlling time.

"It's night when the moon comes out and the sun goes down" Gemma 3.7m

Here Gemma heralds cyclical time, rather than linear time. Cyclical time is more closely adhered to nature, seasons, lunar movements, tides and rhythms. The events of a year are repeated again and again each year. The patterns of the year punctuate time, making its passing noticeable. I can say here that I have not yet sighted Christmas decorations in the shops, but it won't be long. Anniversaries creep up on us and we say, 'goodness that time of year again, so soon'. Have you ever wondered why the years of your childhood seemed to go on forever? One explanation is that as we age, the cycles of events within each year contract the space between them with each repetition. Make sense? When we are young, our experience of time was shaped by waiting and then celebrating an event. As we age our experience of time is less of the waiting and more of the memories of a chain of events which kaleidoscope into one. Make any more sense?

Cyclical time can often be linked to linear time. For instance, one person's life is linear, you are born, you live, then die, but generations are cyclical. With every death somewhere, another life is born.

"I don't know about time but I do know night time, supper time and tea time" Caitlin 2.11m

Caitlin knows more than she is telling you. Time given to certain endeavors indicates how valuable they are within a community. The value of a discourse, or way of believing, stacks a form of education, the more time is given to it. Sounds obvious? This temporal space, or time in the school or program to undertake certain forms of education must also take place within (if put into practice) a physical space. This spatial time and space is a good indicator of the value given to aspects of education. The time spent sitting and 'working' at books, or the time spent giggling and making jokes with mates, the time and place for mucking about or for practicing numeracy are all forms of power and as such are privileged over one another. Such privileging has repercussions, the space in which the 'Othered' or under-privileged experience occurs (no matter how briefly) reflects this undervaluing. It is always startling to go into a formal school and look in the bathrooms (actually they are toilet blocks). No value is placed on anything which can occur in there, so the space reflects that. Look in the bathrooms of schools in Reggio Emilia and they are places of joy, light and social life. These social spaces reflect that this educational endeavor understands that no space or time is to be under-valued in so much as it is building the child (Walkerdine, 1999). In Reggio Emilia the decision to create ateliers (workshops or studios) was premised on their belief that children were living in a visual world and needed to be visually literate. Therefore the creation of space and time, which privileged this belief, occurred.

"I know the time tells you what it is time for, like time for lunch, time for breakfast and time for dinner" Madison 4.5y

Madison foregrounds the notion of certain things occurring in a pattern throughout the day. Rhythms (and oft misunderstood routines) are cyclical, they occur each day and in a certain sequence and can be the anchor for some children. One toddler, Premit, used to recite the events in a litany, as though by speaking of them she could hurry time and make her mother come sooner. She'd say, 'playing, then story, then lunch, then sleeping, then playing, then MUMMY COME!' We have all met children who attempt to hurry time like this, unaware that these events are linked to immutable timetables, both that of the school and that of the parent.

Madison's words can also be used to illustrate the time fractured days of children in institutions of education. The long periods of time spent in schools in Reggio Emilia, with nothing to do but the job in hand, may appear to be present in other schools, but on closer examination, who owns the time within those long periods is in question. I've heard of programs where children during the 'morning program' which on paper might look like 2 hours, is in fact a whirl of ticking off the activities, where children are rotated through a quick time in blocks, the mandatory puzzle, 'have you done a painting?', and 'you need to finish that now its group time'. The reputed short attention span of young children is a myth I'd like to dispel. If we construct their day so it is full of short times, then how can we ever see the long attention span? It is not uncommon in the toddler room for us to see children spend 40 minutes on a painting, or one and a half hours in convivial company at the dough table, or an hour inventing writing at the drawing table.

No more absurd is the idea that we need to rotate a program of activities, so those children may experience a variety. This 'all sorts' or 'entertainment curriculum' means children are spending short amounts of time at meaningless activities, which are not repeated. This privileging of variety over mastery and repetition is another form of time control by adults. I'll give you an example. I no longer rotate the books on the bookshelf. Instead I respect children's rights to have about them the books they like, while at the same time giving them more opportunities to use other books. So instead of taking away puzzles or books in that space of the room, I add and never take away. Now this does lead to an immense collection, and on occasions a great deal of tidying up. However, the approximately 100 books, which now live in book corner, are all used throughout the week. Children returning to favorite ones, whilst relishing newer ones. It means also we are able to freeze in time, materials, so a child coming on Monday and Tuesday is able to access the same books he used the week before. There is no magic disappearance of materials, if children are offered it in the beginning, they are then able to have it forever, or until it wears out, breaks or is loved to death.

Jonathon is so familiar with the materials in book and puzzle corner, that in the midst of the excitement surrounding the cook's cats visiting, he found the three books about cats, and the Chinese word card with a cat on it from a pack of fifty, to offer the cat his own image. Peter Høeg (1995) speaks of it,

> *To sense time, to speak about time you have to sense that something has changed. And you have to sense that within or behind the change there is also something that was present before. The perception of time is the inexplicable union in the consciousness of both change and constancy* (p. 230).

Changes in programs include time and the power time wields. Time includes the constancy and change of materials. Young children, so much at the mercy of teacher's cupboards and storerooms, deserve both the constancy and the change.

"I'm going to school after my party in June" Natalie 4.6y

The joyful occasion of a birthday party and of achieving another numeral also means Natalie is about to make a rite of passage; she is about to go to school. To be truthful Natalie is a bit premature in her timing; she will have to wait another six months until January. But her slip is a mirror of the ages and stages or "ladder - of - progress" (Mallory and New 1994) which characterizes so much of our educational framework (New 1998; Dahlberg 1999; Moss 1999). By a historical accident, Captain Cook was English, we are aligned to the British and therefore English speaking educational system. However, if Cook had been from Scandinavia, we would be sending our children to formal schooling at age 7 or 8. We would regard with horror the idea of sending children such as Natalie to formal schooling to learn to read and write at five and a half. We would have no concerns about her playing and learning in long informal days with little structure imposed. We would relish her opportunities to become herself within the social context, before formal expectations were placed on her.

Natalies' slip, intimating as soon as she was five she will be off to school, is one I believe we all make, 'oh, he's 11 months and still not pulling himself up, I'll plan a few experiences to teach him, he should be doing that by now', or 'she's nearly 3 and still in nappies'. We make judgments about children from a normative stance, and this stance is situated in as Cannella puts it the 'scientific notion of the child' (Cannella 1999, p37). Developmentally Appropriate Practice is firmly imbedded in such a discourse (Mallory and New 1994; Fleer 1995; Dahlberg, Moss 1999; Moss 1999; MacNaughton 2000). Absurd by-products of this ages and stages emerge, such as this , a 'toddler table training chair', (Pre-school Equipment PTY LTD Catalogue), or 'reading recovery' for children aged five. Imagine what the Europeans who send their children at 6 years of age, and the Scandinavians would think? On the other hand, in Hong Kong, 4 is almost too old to start formal schooling. The gist of my argument is that age is arbitrary. Adults within a discourse make a cultural and scientific construct of when it is right (or a truth) for a child to be achieving certain tasks. In this act the child is 'Othered', removed from the dialogue and pathologised if unable to meet these pre-determined levels (Mallory and New, 1994; New, 1998; Cannella, 1999).

Moreover, the idea that children should not revisit their past - "I've finished with three now I'm four" syndrome, also prevails. In a recent article, Cathie Harrison (Harrison, 2000) mentions the 'glass ceiling', which can limit experiences for gifted children in early childhood. I would like to argue that there is a glass elevator in which children rise along the ladder of progress. In this glass lift there is no down button - and once skills have been achieved, an adult activates the up button. The consequences of this are that, not only are children's lives dominated by what adults think they should know and when they should know it (hence the glass ceiling), but also the glass bottom makes children renounce their previous passions and interests. For instance, it is considered inappropriate for a four year old to play with baby toys (in early childhood settings), or an eight year old to enjoy reading toddler flap books, or indeed play to have a significant part in the curriculum. The act of physically remembering and enacting a previous age is viewed as a doubtful experience. This leads to the language of denigration, such as 'don't be such a baby'.

Much of this measurement and evaluation of children is to prepare them for the next stage in life, so a child is being prepared for walking, or sitting at a table, or school (Gamage, 1999). The most heinous expression of this preparation mania was a comment made to a parent by an early childhood teacher, about Jack's particular friendship with one other child. The suggestion was made to change Jack's days so that he would have to make other friends, to get him ready for school. Jack was 3 years old.
Trisha David (1999) sums it up by writing,

> *There is a notion that the learning achieved in the first five years is not 'real' education and that the purpose of nursery provision is to prepare children, to lick them into shape in a number of ways, so that the reception class can begin the proper process of education.* (p.83)

This is echoed by the NSW Dept of Education assertion that all children should start the formal years of school, 'ready to learn'. Once they have reached school, Tobin (1997) argues we chose educational forms, which then prepare them for adulthood:

> *events and experiences hold significance only if our narratives of education and child development name them as stepping stones on the paths towards positive or negative developmental outcomes ....[We] value activities that we believe have a long term pay off at the expense of activities that seem frivolous or pointless because they are not correlated with success later in life.* (p.13-14)

"There are two 7o'clocks, in the morning and in the night time. You get up for one and go to bed for the other! 8 o'clock means we are late" Adam 4y.

I love the way Adam knows about being late, and his two 7 o'clocks give us day and night in time. But I will use Adam's words to talk about a hurried child. This child dashes between dancing, music, soccer, enhancement classes, kindy gym and singing. Little can be seen or heard of the 'frivolous' here. One of the characteristics of Mia-Mia, some Danish and Swedish schools I've seen and of the schools in Reggio Emilia is that their days are characterized by long periods of time devoted to nothing but the job at hand. In Reggio Emilia, the morning starts at 9 am (extended day children have been playing in the piazza) with a class parliament; once children have discussed the proposed morning's vents, they then have until 12.00 to get done what they wanted to do. Naturally one group of children wanting to share their thinking with another may punctuate the morning, or if the weather fines up, a change of venue, but this is at the child's behest. Grouping together again at 12.00, the children discuss the morning and plan ahead for the next day. This gift of uninterrupted time is central to the children's experience. It is far from the idea in some British infant schools where as Phillip Gammage put it:

> *The British, however, seem obsessed with literacy and numeracy 'hours', with refusing to recognize the crucial role of play in the development of the child and are, it is said, even thinking of removing the traditional 'playtime' break (little lunch) for many young children. What would they make of Finnish children's periodic playbreak every fifty minutes, or the relatively short school day (Gamage 1999, p.161).*

So in Italy and Finland, an hour's flight away, a different construction of education is being lived.

"When I grow up to be a teenager I'm going to give massages in Kmart" Nicola 5y.

When Nicola grows up she will live in a world we cannot conceive. Once the stuff of science fiction, Nicola may live to 120, and her children possibly 200. What sort of relationships will she have (puts another slant on life long partner, or till death do us part), how long will her reproductive life be, how long will she have a working life, or when 'old age' arrives will it be dreaded and reviled as a failure of science and medicine? How will she make enough in superannuation? What will the children of today need to know to be able to make a life of this 200 years? (Gamage, 1999)

Growing up and the physical speed with which we do, it is changing too. Not only will children live longer but also other physiological changes will make their lives different to ours. Looking back on the last centuries: in 1880's girls reached puberty at about 17, now girls reach puberty at about 12 (Gamage, 1999). This shortening of girlhood, means a proportion of girls in primary school are sexually (if not emotionally) mature. What does this mean for education, and girls? The words, which describe the stages of life, will have to change: maiden, girl, boy, teenager, middle aged, geriatric and child will all hold new meanings for future generations.

"You read to learn to study for tomorrow" Ayla 4.6m

Ayla speaks as though her entire life is mapped out. Indeed she can tell me which school, high school and university she will go to. It's as though her learning and existence was based on what she **will** be able to do, not what she **can** do now.

Her words came out of an investigation, which I proposed. In my work about the challenges Reggio Emilia poses our images and provision of education, I am often told that, 'well we don't have the space, time, money, that kind of child' etc etc etc.. So I decided to set up the most impossible situation I could within my teaching life and the life of the children at Mia-Mia to see what would happen, and to hopefully answer the critics.

In a discussion with colleagues about newsletters, it dawned on me that our newsletter spoke about the children, and did not offer the children an opportunity to speak of their lives themselves. As our school is for children birth to 5 you may wonder how this would be possible. So did I. So I decided to construct an investigation, which would eventually lead to an issue of the newsletter, created by the children by the end of the year. I had no preconceived ideas about how it would look, but I trusted the children would work something out. I'm the toddler teacher, but I also work in the morning and afternoon program with the preschool children, who incidentally were all toddlers with me. Our daily contact, over a period of four to five years means we have a rich and authentic relationship with each other.

I chose six children to work with of whom Ayla and Grace (both four year old) were two, believing the combinations would make for some interesting thinking. However, these combinations could only be achieved on Friday afternoons between 4-4.30. Close your eyes and imagine a Friday afternoon in a child care center with a full indoor outdoor program running, parents arriving, staff leaving and you begin to get the picture. A table was our territory. I showed each group of two a newspaper and recorded their comments. Ayla was extremely competent, reading words, spelling others out and very vocal. Grace, who is bilingual in Mandarin and English, was less certain, agreeing with Ayla. They posed the notion that the paper was something adults read, more in the form of entertainment. The next week, (7 days later) I offered them the Chinese daily, The minute they saw me with the paper they came over, attentive and tuned in to the Newspaper investigation. You can see how competent Grace is and how Ayla struggles. The following week I showed them the newsletter. The whole concept of how you tell someone about something without the witness doing the telling to the listener, secondhand witnessing or news, was posed. The girls came up with the idea of a picture and grabbed pen and paper and drew their favorite event of the day. (Which was digging in the sandpit) which surprised me.

I know these children well, so I was not at all concerned about the next step. Once they tossed the drawings off, I asked them questions, which showed them I had no idea of the representations they were talking about. For instance, Ayla's representation of the hole in the sandpit looked exactly the same as her representation of the soft fall pieces. Soon they realized they would need to label parts of the drawing, and representation was clarified. Then I asked them what they were talking about when they played this game. Both hesitated, then Grace said, "Well. You could write what I said" and drew a circle with her finger near the mouth of her person. After some clarification I realized she was talking about speech balloons.

This device, so clever and so simple, immediately caught on, and during the following week, other children adopted it to make their people speak. Tessa dubbed it 'talking pictures'. But then I noticed something strange, children who did not come on Fridays were using the term and the devise of 'talking pictures'. The first talking picture was made on the 16th March. By May they were an established form across the school. I grabbed the idea from the girls and offered photographs to the toddlers, so they too could make people speak. Very young children manipulated the form, making photographs crack jokes, or revive some argument. You can see, in an investigation about snails, their recollection using the photos of the clay making as a window to further thinking. While remembering, their emotions at the time are mirrored again in the words spoken. Rachel was anxious the snail would slither off the plate and 'attack' her. Everytime the snail slid off the plate she'd back away. Rachel's "No" is a true representation of what happened.

But this device has a life of its own. In some work about our rabbits' holiday at our cook's house over Easter, Hayley, a young toddler, draws a shape (it's the rabbit) and gets the adult to write the words. In her 'I'm talking', Haley is talking in more than one language. She did this in June. Haley does not come on Fridays.

The story of the newsletter is still incomplete, but I use it to illustrate several aspects of time and of time constraints. The initial idea was born out of the girls working with me for three times over a three-week period. After each seven day period they were able to immediately pick up where they left off, or perhaps that's not true, because I believe they think about 'stuff' all the time, and perhaps the newspaper 'stuff' had been percolating in the times in-between. So they picked up where they had taken the idea too, while not working on it. Children I believe sustain thought over long periods of time (with or without us), and I now feel the idea of that fragile 'teachable moment', is denigrating to children's capabilities. We had only a brief time each week. It is tantalizing to think of what we might have achieved over a longer period on each occasion. However the way the idea filtered throughout the school, this gift becoming part of the lexicon of the school, a sort of short hand, which makes life richer, funnier and more visible, is wondrous. From Ayla to Hayley with love. I also use this story to illustrate that as a teacher, it is possible to trust children to think over extended periods, that there is time in a day to see such wondrous thinking for yourself. That sometimes hurrying things, of making it all happen in a short space of time is not the answer. Brenda Fyfe talks of teachers 'slowing down' (Fyfe, 1994) and trusting children to think of important things to think about and do. It also shows that every moment in the day has opportunities for authentic engagement with children.

However, I would hate you to think that I'm saying don't go for lengthy periods of time, such as days, months, weeks, in which you and children can think together about important things. What I am saying is that it is possible to still sustain extended investigations over time in almost impossible circumstances.

"I don't want to grow up to be an adult, because they don't like Pokemons" 5y.

Peter Moss (1999) discusses the prevalent discourse of childhood merely being a preparation for adulthood, "In this out-come driven approach, the concern is less with the childhood that young children are living, and mainly with the school children and adults they will become" (p.148)

Given that this is the discourse, then the structure of children's days will not reflect their present, it will reflect their future. This school child's comment about adult's censure of his interest also mirrors Tobin's comments about how we don't pay attention to what we see as frivolous (Tobin 1997) and is another form of time power. We are denying the present in our construct of time for children.

Time is when you wait, time is when you sing, time is when you paint, time is when you draw. There are times all the time. Times are lovely. Like the time in love. Those are times that are lovely. There are also times when strange things are going on. 5y.

What can you say about these words, almost lyrical in their composition and certainly philosophical in their content? Fast time, slow time, multiple times occurring within the same time frame. That context can shape the kind of time, such as lovely times, and strange times. Do you remember being in the first blush of love? Other times existed, but swept over you as you awaited the times you can be together with the one you are in love with. Maybe we can change that around to time of homesickness, how time dragged, time became dark and sticky, dragging your feet and the hands of the clock, as weeks and days took far longer to pass.

Allison James, speaking at the AECA conference in Darwin last year, described some research she was engaged in with eight years olds about their understanding of time. No this is not about how they tell the time, it was about their experience of being a child within adults' time frames and constructs. James asked the children to make a pie chart of what they did during the day, apportioning a slice of pie to each interval they nominated. Obviously she ascertained the children understood this device. What immediately became apparent was the children's response to time in which they had control, such as leisure: playing with friends etc, and the time which had to be devoted to household tasks, such as washing up. These periods of the day represented by slices, were often extremely detailed, naming friends or places or TV programs, or the things of leisure or for domestic work. One child noted minutely the minutes it took to wash a plate. For all children the major proportion of the circle, or the largest slice was given to school. Few children even bothered to divide this up into lunch or particular classes. In many cases the slice was bigger even than sleeping. Visually this blank slice, larger than anything else, jarred against the detail of their other lived moments during the day. James posits it is because they have no control, that this predetermined section of the day will happen to them regardless. The juggernaut of education commanding time making children powerless.

What would the pie chart look like for a baby in child care, or a pre-school child with sessional days, or toddlers? I'm mindful of something Sergio Spaggari (1997) says, "the greatest abuse perpetrated against children is the waste of their intelligence", and Lillian Katz says some forms of education are simply a waste of children's time (1999). Within early childhood institutions we are informed, and inform, the discourse about education (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999) and therefore the time education is 'allowed'. I return to the questions I asked at the beginning,

- What impact does time have on children and their childhood's?
- What impact does time and measurement have on their education?
- What sort of power is wielded in time?
- Who wields the power of time?

I return to eternity. Time in educational settings may seem like an eternity to young children. We are not passive in this discourse, and need to examine how we practice time in our work with young children. Time is power and our use of it is powerful. Unpacking time from children's perspectives might be the first start.

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Reconceptualising Time

Kerrie Trebilcock

Reconceptualising Time

Kerrie Trebilcock

"Time thoughts"

You can't turn back the clock, but you can wind it up again.

Time flies.

Watchmakers work over time.

Einstein was right. It is possible to spend an eternity in a meeting and not age.

Have you got a minute? Is the same thing, as 'I want you to do something for me'.

Time waits for no man.

Too much to do and too little time to do it.

Time is always moving forwards towards the future in a linear fashion, like a time line.

Time marches on.

If you are in a hurry to shave you will understand the phrase, "just in the nick of time"

One day at a time.

The trouble with life in the fast lane is that you get to the other end in an awful hurry.

Biological clocks don't have snooze buttons.

Time is of the essence.

You can have:

Time up your sleeve, time on your side, time on your hands, time in lieu, free time, down time, a past time, a time lapse, time out, a time table, no time, playtime.

You can:

Sit and watch time go by, pass time (this could be painful), make time or free up time, lose time or find time, be on time, get in time, be before your time, be ahead of your time, serve time, do time, tell the time, be on borrowed time.

The topic of this conference is Unpacking or Re-conceptualising time. When Janet rang me and asked me to present a paper on this topic, I struggled with how I can contribute to this topic. I also wondered whether I had 'time' to think about this, in addition to working full time and studying. I asked her to give me a few days to think about it. "Perhaps you could explore the children's conceptions of time", she suggested.

I became intrigued with the topic and began to notice how often people refer to "time" in the course of the day. I began to explore further. I then decided that before we re-conceptualise time, we must conceptualise it. I wanted to get as many conceptions of time as possible. I asked both children and adults to conceptualise time for me.

This is one adult's comment.

> Time is the distance between one experience in our lives and the next. Time can be represented throughout our lives using three major factors. The Past, the Present and the Future. Everything we do in our lives can be measured into time. eg. Our memories of childhood experiences, what occurred yesterday or a moment ago, **"when did it happen?"** are measurements of time in **the Past.**
>
> Our immediate needs and experiences, **"It's happening now"** is a measurement of time in **The Present.**
>
> Our dreams, wishes and goals, "**When will it happen?"** is a measurement of time in the future. (J. Bruce)

This is another adult's conception.

> Time to me is in constant still movement. We move through it but it never goes anywhere. I see it as flowing. Every movement, every stillness. As an eternal existence, almost like space. If I were to symbolise it, it would be an eternal symbol. With no beginning and no end. Constant. Time cannot be gained or lost. It is now. Never beginning and never ending. Time is existing.

I wanted different conceptions of time from different age groups, so I asked some of the children from Year 8 within the school.

What about Liam – 13 years old: "Time is a unit of measurement which measures past, present and future. It is something that humans are ruled by, or are forced to be ruled by. A clock is the way that time is measured."

> *Time is like a river. It's always flowing. Upstream is the future, downstream is the past, so during the present, we are always heading towards the future, upstream."*

Liam used the analogy of the stream. I was amazed then, when I stumbled across this.

> *And an astronomer said, Master what of Time?*
> *And he answered:*
> *You would measure time the measureless and the immeasurable.*
> *You would adjust your conduct and even direct the course of your spirit according to hours and seasons.*
> *Of time you would make a stream upon whose bank you would sit and watch its flowing.*
>
> *Yet the timeless in you is aware of life's timelessness,*
> *And knows that yesterday is but to-day's memory and to-morrow is to-day's dream.*
>
> *And that that which sings and contemplates in you is still dwelling within the bounds of that first moment which scattered the stars into space.*
> *Who among you does not feel that his power to love is boundless?*
> *And yet who does not fell that very love,*
> *Though boundless, encompassed within the centre of his being and moving not from love thought to love thought, nor from love deeds to other love deeds?*
> *And is not time even as love is, undivided and paceless?*
>
> *But if in your thought you must measure time into seasons, let each season encircle all the other seasons,*
> *And let to-day embrace the past with remembrance and the future with longing.*
> *Kahil Gibran.*

I was becoming obsessed about the notion of time.
Every word everyone uttered seemed to have some reference to time.
I kept researching.

One of the parents in the group wrote this down from the Bible:

> *With the lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. God is not restricted to the perimeters of time. Time does not confine him, nor*

> *does he live within the boundaries of a form of measurement. He has always existed, there was never a beginning time, nor will there be a finish time for him. He has always been.* (2 Peter 3:8)

I remember as a child, learning this about God and praying for God to move in a particular situation, after it had taken place. My childish mind reasoned that if time was irrelevant for God, he could just go back and alter the situation before it occurred.

She also offered this thought on a totally different note.

> *I know someone who is being released from prison today. He's been 'doing time' in a low security prison up in the country for the last year. Is time here being used as a redeemer, a punisher, a re-habilitator or as a tool to keep an offender far away so that all those connected to that offender can live in denial rather than face and help someone with a big problem. Can time, purely on its own merit, transform someone?*

I then started to think about the issues of time in Early Childhood settings.
One of my biggest bugbears and I'm sure one that many of you in the room will have experienced this phenomena yourselves.
The push down curriculum.

I remembered this article in the *Herald/Sun* on Monday 21st February, this year.

Parents rush to create super children.
NO KIDDING AROUND. Herald/Sun Monday 21st February 2000.

Six week old babies are being enrolled in physical education and music classes as parents scramble to give children a competitive edge. Thousands of other children, some as young as two and three, are being taught one or more foreign languages. Infant training classes and after-school programs are booming with new franchises barely keeping up with demand.

Special courses to prepare children for kindergarten, baby gymnastics and super-learning programs are particularly popular as parents pay hundreds of dollars to accelerate their children's development.

But child psychologists have warned the rush to train "superkids" could create a generation of children unable to think creatively or occupy themselves.

The Herald Sun has also learned;

- *Children as young as 18 months are being enrolled at the rapidly expanding Kumon Institute, where they take classes in subjects such as Maths, English and Japanese.*
- *Demand for singing and drama courses for children as young as four has outstripped supply prompting U.K.-based Stagecoach Theatre Arts to expand its Victorian operations dramatically.*
- *Parents of preschoolers are enrolling their children in one or more foreign language courses – a trend that has prompted a Melbourne Childcare network to offer Mandarin language courses for three and four year olds.*
- *Average family spending on out of school activities for a single child has jumped more than 30 per cent in the past 10 years to $41 per week.*

But while Victorians flock to the latest junior education and sports courses, experts have warned increasing numbers of Victorian youngsters are falling victim to the "Hurried child Syndrome" – a condition that leaves children stressed out and without the ability to play in a normal way.

According to Jan Deans, a senior lecturer in Early Childhood Development at Melbourne University, intense competition for jobs and university places has prompted increasing numbers of parents to try to accelerate their children's development.

"Unfortunately, it seems the days of the quiet Vegemite sandwich after school are disappearing" Ms Deans said. "For many children, every afternoon is now consumed with some sort of structured activity such as gym, ballet, piano, art, choir or sport. Ms Deans said forcing children along a conveyor belt of structured activities could hinder normal development. "It seems children may be losing the ability to fill in time by themselves and losing the ability to think creatively" she said. "Emotional literacy- developed at home through interaction with parents, friends and family members – is far more important than many of the skills they learn in highly structured classes.

Ms Deans also questions the value of subjecting a four year old to acting and singing training, saying that in some cases it amounted to child abuse. "There's a lot to be said for children simply sitting at home with their parents," she said. " I find the performance aspect of some of these activities quite sick and a potential breach of the rights of a child" (Pinkney, M., 2000)

What about the Literacy issues reported in the media?

"Children must start real school work early." "We must give them a good start on the education ladder." "Children today are smarter, and can learn faster."

These are the words of some who would try to speed up children's development, make them take short cuts to maturity and by-pass their childhood.

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Carlina Rinaldi from Reggio Emilia said in one of her presentations in 1998,

> *One important right of the child which a lot of cultures often tend to forget is the right of a child to have a childhood - to have time. It's the greatest gift you can give a child - Time.*
> *There seems to be a pressure these days to get children to do things faster. We have fast food, fast cars, fast computer programs. Now we want our children to do things faster, eg to learn to read at a younger age. Why?*

Returning from Reggio in April 1999, the headmaster of the school I work in included this paragraph in his report back to parents.

> *The message that I received in Italy was " that the emphasis was very much on the importance of making time for relationships and communication, particularly as far as parents and teachers are concerned with children. Perhaps the crowded curriculum that concerns all schools today is the product of a society that considers* ***more*** *to be better. Reggio Emilia is about doing less but in much greater depth. They allow more time for children.* (Bolger).

Jim Greenman in his book, *Caring Spaces, Learning Places*, writes:

> *Time is a dimension to be taken into account in children's environments. Anyone who remembers school is aware of the feelings of oppression when time is controlled by others.*
>
> *The structuring of time has an enormous impact on how we feel. Institutions of social control use the structure of time to discipline, torture or drive people mad by assuming absolute power over the rhythms of living and applying varying amounts of randomness amidst a rigid order.*
>
> *Yet too casual an approach to the clock can limit program achievement and deprive children and adults of the security that comes with predictable routines. In early childhood settings, basic time blocks and the day's rhythms are defined by the tasks of living: eating, toileting, sleeping, staff schedules, the physical space and the scheduled sharedspace. Routine weds the tasks and the times. Are the children in your care subjected to a timetable?*

Working in an independent school, my children are subjected to a timetable of specialist teachers. After returning from Reggio Emilia in 1996, we talked about time and the flexibility of time in our program.

In Reggio, they don't have a timetable as such, they refer to the structure of the day as "having a series of appointments." This a far less rigid notion than a "timetable." If your children have the complaint, "I never get time to finish anything," then perhaps it is time to rethink the program that you are offering the children in your care. This comment gives a clear message about the social value of depth and concentration in your program, as well as to who is in charge.

Time tables, like space, need flexibility if learning and caring are to take place. What makes life worth living is the chance, the hope that wonderful things might happen – a hope based on experience with random surprises. Avoiding narrow and rigid schedules that choke, or loose schedules that frighten or intoxicate generally requires a thoughtful and complete analysis as to how all the program structural elements interact – time, space, goals, organisation and people.

A lot of the work that I do in my centre has been influenced by the philosophies from Reggio Emilia. Armed with all this research, I decided I wanted to embark on a research project with the children in my group, to explore their theories of time. I was reminded of some work that was done in Sweden and documented in the book, *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care* by Dahlberg, Moss and Pence. (1999). Those of you who were here last year may remember it. The context is that a group of pedagogues participating in a project called the Stockholm project, decided to listen to the children's hypotheses as well as their fantasies.

Anna starts documenting a project on time, recording what is being done and what is being said. The project on time started out from a conversation that a group of six 5 year olds had during lunch. They had been looking at the clock on the wall and discussing what time their parents usually picked them up. Anna observed these children had a real interest in finding out more about time and the clock. So the next day she took the clock down from the wall and put it on a table in the atelier. She then asked the children the question, "What is time?" She recorded their responses.

The one question that she asked which fascinated me was; **Can you get time back?**
One of the children said, "Time goes round like the sun. But the same time that comes back is not the same time, because I do not reach 5 years every time I have my birthday".

This comment was the inspiration for my research. Did the children that I worked with have such interesting and delightful ideas? The purpose of my project was to research 4-5 year old children's conceptions of time. My objectives were to ask questions, listen to and respect children's theories of time – but also challenge them, support relationships between the children and to offer them a context in which they can explore and go deeper into investigation.

I started by asking the children the question, "What is time?"

I recorded the whole group's responses.

It seemed to me that their responses fell into the following categories.

- Time as events
- Time as seasons
- Times and feelings
- Measuring time – the clock, the environment
- Things changing over time.

I chose a group of children to participate in this research project with me. I tried to choose a cross section of children according to their responses.

Jessica G: Nearly time up. It takes time to go places where you want to go.

- Time as events

Danielle: For what? What sort of time? Is it on a clock? Maybe it could be on a time when we grow up. It could be time for a fingernail to grow. Time to eat.

- Time as events
- Things changing over time.

James: It tells the time. The clock. Times for using the clock. Time can be an alarm clock. Time can be for using your watch. Time can be for a big huge clock.

- Measuring time – the clock.

Michael: Time is like telling the time. Not telling the time. Telling the time on the microwave, on heaters.

Does time have a shape?

Circle. Cause it's a round clock.

- Measuring time – the clock, the environment

Matthew B: When the time is 10 or 12 o'clock. Or 11 or 1 or 2. 3,4, 5 or 6 o'clock. They are the numbers of time. Time is when you wait, time is when you sing, time is when you paint, time is when you draw. The times come all the time. Times are lovely. Like the times in love. Those are times that are lovely. There are times when you see something strange going on.

Time is about when you see a clock. Alarm clocks tell the time. Time is sometimes winter. Sometimes Summer. Like spring. Like Autumn. Time is May, June.

I had stumbled across a time genius. I referred back to a statement that I had read in a book called *Young children in action* by Hohmann, Banet and Weikart, (1979). "Young children have a long way to go before their understanding of time begins to represent an adult's."

This statement was not reflective of what I was hearing from a boy aged 4 years and 10 months. I published this statement in one of the newsletters and then one of the parents brought me this passage from the Bible.

> ***A time for everything.***
> *There is a time for everything,*
> *And a season for every activity under heaven.*
> *A time to be born and a time to die,*
> *A time to plant and a time to uproot.*
> *A time to kill and a time to heal.*
> *A time to tear down and a time to build.*
> *A time to weep and a time to laugh,*
> *A time to mourn and a time to dance,*
> *A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,*
> *A time to embrace and a time to refrain,*
> *A time to search and a time to give up,*
> *A time to keep and a time to throw away,*
> *A time to tear and a time to mend,*
> *A time to be silent and a time to speak,*
> *A time to love and a time to hate,*
> *A time for war and a time for peace.* (Ecclesiastes 3, Verses 1-8.)

I formulated guiding questions for the project.

What are the children's theories of time?
Do the children think that time has a shape?
How do children dance with time?
How do children measure time?
Can the children explain their ideas through drawing?
Can children understand the notion of a time line?
Do the children think that time moves slowly or quickly? Why? When?
What elements of time will be involved in the project. How long did it take?
How will we work on this project in relation to our timetable?
What is our power over time? Do we give children the any power over time?
Do children have a right to time?
Do the children think they can see time? If so, what would it look like?
Do the children understand why they only have one birthday a year?

I continued with my research. I asked the children.

Does time go in a line or in a circle?

Danielle said:	Time goes around. The clock goes around and then it stays still for a little while and then it clicks and then it goes around. It moves in a big circle.
Jessica said:	In a circle. Because clocks do that.

This thought seemed to be a consensus. Again this conflicts with the information that I read in *Young Children in Action*.

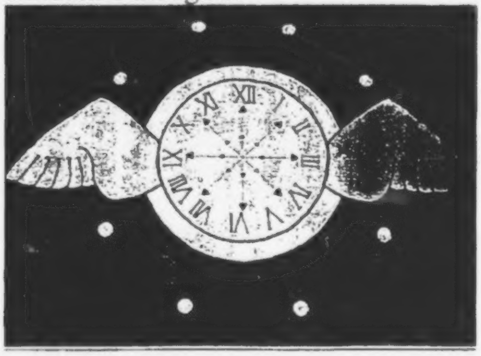
"Preschool children do not have an objective view of time. They estimate the passage of time subjectively – in terms of their own feelings – rather than in terms of an external event like the movement of clock hands".

I was also interested to see how the children thought time moved.

Do they, like adults experience time subjectively?

Adults sometimes view time subjectively: for instance, two hours of waiting in a doctor's office may seem like an eternity.

I also wondered if the mural that we have displayed on the ceiling had contributed to the children's thoughts.



I asked the children - Does time go fast or slow?

Matthew B:	Time goes fast and slow. It goes fast on winter. It goes slow in the jungles of India because giraffes go slow with their big long legs. Leopards go fast, but they also go slow.
Danielle:	It goes slow. Sometimes it goes that fast. Sometimes it goes that slow. It goes slow when you're waiting for something, like for a fingernail to grow and it goes fast when you're not waiting.

Can you see time? Yes on the clock.

Each child drew a clock to illustrate time.

Then James brought in a pile of notes that he had got from the Internet. One of these papers showed a sundial. This was the information that I read out to the children:

Long ago, sundials were used to tell the time. Sundials measure
the shadow cast by the sun as it travels across the sky.

The children decided to trace their shadows and watch the sun in the sky.

So where to go next?
The children didn't seem to be enthused to take this any further. The "time" concept didn't seem to interest them particularly.

I decided to show them the movie, "Back to the future." They loved this movie and were all enthused when we met as a small group.

"Let's make a time machine," said Danielle.
"Yeh!" said James.

So the children sat down and began to draw plans for their time machine. They based their "inventions" on the car that they had seen in the movie. Their language whilst drawing was also based on the movie.

"I want a clock. I want a clock in the time machine that will not run out of petrol."

Michael was very interested in the time machine and he started looking up "time machines" on the internet. He brought in some pictures of "time machines." I wondered if this would stimulate the children's imagination. Will it help them to think of alternatives to the form of the car that they seem stuck on?

They drew another draft of a time machine. Again they all were expressed in the form of a car.

Then Michael's dad brought in, "The Spy who shagged me" video. This video showed two different types of time machines.
One was in the form of a car.
The other one was a different image.

When I asked the children to draw another time machine, I hoped that these different images would be reflected. No. Again they were all in the shape of a car. The children decided that their time machine should be in a real car. Fortunately we had a "bomb" on the property, so we went and had a look at that. We decided that it would be really difficult to work on this car, as we would have to keep coming outside. We needed to build something that we could work on inside.

Could we make a time machine out of materials that we had in the storeroom? Yes. Most of them agreed. This was when Danielle announced, "I didn't really want to be involved in this but it doesn't matter, cause I've got used to it now".

What shape could it be?
Like a car – James.
What will make it from?
Wood – Michael
Plastic- Jessica
What else do you want in your time machine?
Controls – James
Danielle asked James. "What do controls look like?"
"Like a steering wheel", he explained.
"Where is it"? she asked.
"At the front."

From there the children brainstormed and added to their list, a clock, lights, buttons and dials, a window, a door, a brake and a fast pedal and electricity on the roof. They drew a plan for the time machine.
Then they used the mediums of clay and wire to construct their time machines.

Although the time machines were all similar, it was important to decide whose time machine to build. I explained to the children what a vote was and said that we would have to vote whose time machine we would build. Danielle's plan was voted as the one that we would build. James who really wanted his plan to be voted in, announced, "Well I'm not going to build it then".

We sent home a note to the parents of the children involved in the project and asked for help. "Can you come over to St. Leonard's College to help us make a wooden time machine? We want it to be 1 metre long and 50cm wide. We want wheels, windows, doors, a seat and some controls to work it".

One father looked at Danielle's plan and at his workshop at home, he cut out some wood and then brought it in. The children hammered and sawed and then began to paint.

Another dad came in and added some lights. Another dad came in with an old dashboard, controls and wires.

So what do I make of all this?
Have I answered any of the questions that I set out to?

Has this project given the children involved a better understanding of the concept of time?
Has this project changed my image of children's understandings of time?

Yes. I think so. I think I would have argued prior to this project that children of this age could not understand or express the abstract concept of time like an adult does. Hohmann, Banet and Weikart in their book *Young children in Action*, state that "about the age of three, children are just beginning to view time as a continuum, to understand that things existed before now and things will exist after now. This is a marked change from an infant's one dimensional conception of time – that things exist only now and they still have a long way to go before their understanding of time begins to resemble an adults."

Another quote from *Young children in Action* is,

> *Adults compare their subjective feelings to objective measures. Young children do not. Because they lack understanding of the objective dimension of time, time really does "fly" and "crawl" for young children, depending on what they are doing.*

I found myself thinking about these statements and trying to evaluate if this was what was reflected in my research. The children's responses to my questions have surprised me. Remember some the children's comments that I have mentioned and their similarities to the Bible and Kahil Gibran.

What is understanding and knowledge anyway?

> *Knowledge is not the discovery of some inherent truth about the world. It is not finding and representing an objective reality waiting 'out there' to be discovered. Knowledge is not something absolute, existing outside context and unchangeable – and as such, transmitted to children. Knowledge is the product of the process of construction, involving interpretation and meaning making.* (Moss, 1999)

Carlina Rinaldi from Reggio Emilia writes, "What children learn, emerges in the process of self and social construction and learning is the subjective process of constructing reality with others."

Working on projects, like our time invention project, inspired by Reggio Emilia, is all about research. The children researching and constructing knowledge and the teacher researching and constructing knowledge. This project on time has been a fantastic experience for all involved. The children have worked together as a group with the one common goal. They have discussed their conceptions of time with each other and hopefully constructed new knowledge and thoughts about what time is. As the adult in the project, I too have learnt a lot about the children and I have questioned and reconceptualised time in relation to both adults and children and our program.

I'd like to leave you today with a poem and an inspiration. I hope that these, along with my presentation today, challenges you and inspires you to try and reconceptualise your own notions of time.

A Lazy thought - By Eve Merriman

There go the grown ups
To the office
To the store
Subway rush
Traffic crush
Hurry, scurry
Worry, flurry.

No wonder
Grownups
Don't grow up
Anymore.

It takes a lot
Of slow
To grow.

Time means different things to different people

To realise the value of ONE YEAR, ask a student who failed a grade.
To realise the value of ONE MONTH, ask a mother who gave birth to a premature baby.
To realise the value of ONE WEEK, ask the editor of a weekly newspaper.
To realise the value of ONE HOUR, ask the boyfriend and girlfriend who are waiting to meet.
To realise the value of ONE MINUTE, ask the person who just missed the train.
To realise the value of ONE SECOND, ask a person who just avoided an accident.
To realise the value of ONE MILLISECOND, ask the person who won a silver medal in the Olympics.

Passing the time. Book ends for the fifth conference

Alma Fleet

Passing the time.
Book ends for the fifth conference.

Alma Fleet

The more time that passes, I find that I value more dearly the inspiration and insight I gain from others. This may sound odd, but I have found a greater richness of understandings with greater complexity of experience. In planning to conclude this complex conference, I felt it important, therefore, to draw upon sources more diverse than those which might usually be consulted in a pedagogical context. If sharing some of my thinking may be helpful for you, I invite you to reflect with me for a few moments. You may remember that I welcomed you with an allusion to *The Little Prince*, who was on a long journey because of his commitment to a vulnerable rose.

Janet then began the conference with the metaphor of the lift which was glass both above and below, some reflections about children's words and provocations about time. Jan and Chelsea used Readers' Theatre to scroll through some historical background and provide a critical perspective to some of our current thinking. The workshops provided opportunities to pursue particular aspects of our umbrella of concerns, and the informal times provided space in which to catch up with friends and explore new possibilities.

I suggest that it is appropriate now to complete a circle of thought by bringing the conference to its conclusion with a return to literature and metaphor. This process of going full circle is of course, placed in a postmodern frame in which the process is unlikely to bring us to the same point at which we began.

In a way, I find this process similar to one that was explained to me as a custom of some of the ancient peoples of this land. I was told that if travellers were approaching some distant Aboriginal groups, a pause was necessary before entering the community space. The travellers would rest on the edge of the space, gathering their thoughts, adjusting their pace to the timing of the lives being lived within the group, and give the group time to accommodate the arrival of the travellers. Leaving might be similarly and sensitively tempered.

We are now at that point in time where we gather ourselves for the next stage of our collective and individual journeys.

A group of travellers whom some of you may have met in a book were involved in an artistic journey to *The land beyond time: A modern exploration of Australia's North-West frontiers* (1984). In the early nineties, a Western Australia art dealer Alex Bortignon, initiated a deep physical as well as spiritual interpretation of the Northwest by artists from the European tradition. His team included the artist John Olsen, the poet and writer

Geoffrey Dutton, the naturalist-conservationist Vince Serventy, and the historian Mary Durack. In his Preface, Olsen wrote that "Australians lead a saucer-like existence, perched on the edge of their unruly continent, and their lives are like exotic orchids which have no relationship to the wilderness stretching between rim and rim". He establishes the context for this magnificent book with a description that may add to the complexity of layers of our understanding about time and space.

> *How strange it is that Europeans should ever have thought of Australia as part of the 'new world'. When the first unwilling settlers arrived here, they found themselves on a continent like a wrinkled brown raft that had drifted away into countless centuries of isolation. The animals, plant life and landforms were so utterly strange to the settlers they could only think of them as 'new', whereas they had evolved since the beginning of time. We are a new people on an antique continent, and we must do a lot more thinking and observing before we can piece this language together into the similes and metaphors which bring deeper lunderstanding. (p.7)*

This land of the ancient and the new is a good place for us to be confronting the unknowable contexts of children and time. We have been attempting to gain greater understanding of children's perceptions of time and of the impact of adult perceptions of time on children's days.

In *Land beyond time* (1984), Vince Serventy wrote of Father Anthony Peile who had worked twenty years earlier at a Mission in the Northwest. Father Peile told of:

> *The five seasons of the desert Aborigines. The first is the beginning of the year, a green time when summer monsoon rains fill lakes and waterholes to the brim. Towards the close of this season the termites build their mounds more vigorously and such insects provide food for the people.*
>
> *Then comes the cooler time, when native animals begin to burrow or shelter in hollow logs. The next season is the time of the gentle winter rains, with cool winds by day and cold ones at night. Plants grow, but only a few provide edible berries and seeding time is yet to come.*
>
> *The fourth season is the time of abundance, when animals emerge from winter shelter, the bush plants bear fruit and the wattles exude sweet-tasting gum. This gum is dissolved in water to make a pleasant drink or added to bland foods as a sweetener.*
>
> *In the last season of the year the hot winds blow from the east, although a breeze from the distant sea provides relief in the afternoon.* (p. 250)

Some of us might listen to this explanation and find it odd or perhaps 'quaint'. Others might react with a certain pragmatism and think – fine, five seasons. This is outside my experience, but I can stretch my mind to accommodate such a reality. There is, after all, nothing mystical or sacred about the four seasons that we thought were absolute; they are perhaps only a convention celebrated by Vivaldi and turned upside down in different hemispheres.

We may have just accommodated this new reality, when faced with the fact that Ian Crawford from the Western Australian Museum, reports on the lives of other peoples, farther to the north…

> *They have seven seasons and all are easily recognised. The times are not fixed. if the rains are late or winter prolonged, there may be delays until the plants and animals respond. White men's clocks and calendars are not allowed to time Aboriginal lives.* (Olsen et al., 1984, p. 250)

Well, clocks are not allowed to rule all children's environments either. Staff in a toddler room writing in an article in *Young Children* may have a useful provocation for us. Wein and Kirby-Smith (1998) reported that they were frustrated by the production line approach to organising children's days which seemed to be dominating their day care centre. Regardless of how involved children were in their activities, everything was stopped for morning tea and packing up was a regular feature of each day, putting everything away to enable each new part of the day to start afresh. Despite the apparent efficiency of this approach, staff became increasingly uncomfortable with it. It seemed fragmented and mitigated against genuine engagement. After much discussion, they decided to remove the clocks from the room and to work on person time rather than responding to a predetermined routine schedule. Children ate when they were hungry, slept when they were tired, and continued building, drawing or thinking when they were engaged in those activities. The challenges of this approach probably seem to outweigh the advantages for most of us, but the possibilities offered by reshaping expectations can at least be considered.

We have been musing about the possibility that adult time and children's time are fundamentally different. Nevertheless, we work in contexts which require some co-existence of these conceptions, if we are not going to accept dominance of the adult construction on the world of the child. We have been challenged to avoid binary constructions, any apparent polarities which simplify rather than complexify constructs and imply that they are in opposition, or even at either end of a continuum. Instead, we have been challenged by the concepts of *Thirdspace* (Soja,1996), that is, the idea that beyond planned and physical actualities (buildings or programs or whatever), there is a third space, one which includes both of the binaries and another lived space, something which includes both possibilities and moves beyond them. This may be a useful device for our problems with the tensions of adult and child time. The *both/and also* possibility creates a mindspace for us to try to engage with these challenges.

We may now be intrigued or uncomfortable. If the absolutes of time are subject to cultural perception, then perhaps adult time is different from children's time. If clocks can be removed, then time may move either faster or slower as human engagement and life necessities require. We may need to accept a world of timetables as well as a world of multiple realities, a conflict which requires *both/and also* solutions.

This conference has provided us with an opportunity to pause for a short while to focus on time as if through a cloudy multi-coloured glass. As we come to a close, I want us to listen again to a voice of a child. This child was part of a group of five year olds in Sweden who were talking about the possible differences between animal time and human time, and wondering whether it was possible to get time back. One child offered the observation that: "Time goes round like the sun, but the same time that comes back is not the same time, because I do not reach five years every time I have my birthday" (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999, p152).

She only had her fifth birthday once, and we have only had this particular time together once. We hope it has been of value for you, and look forward to seeing you again next year.

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